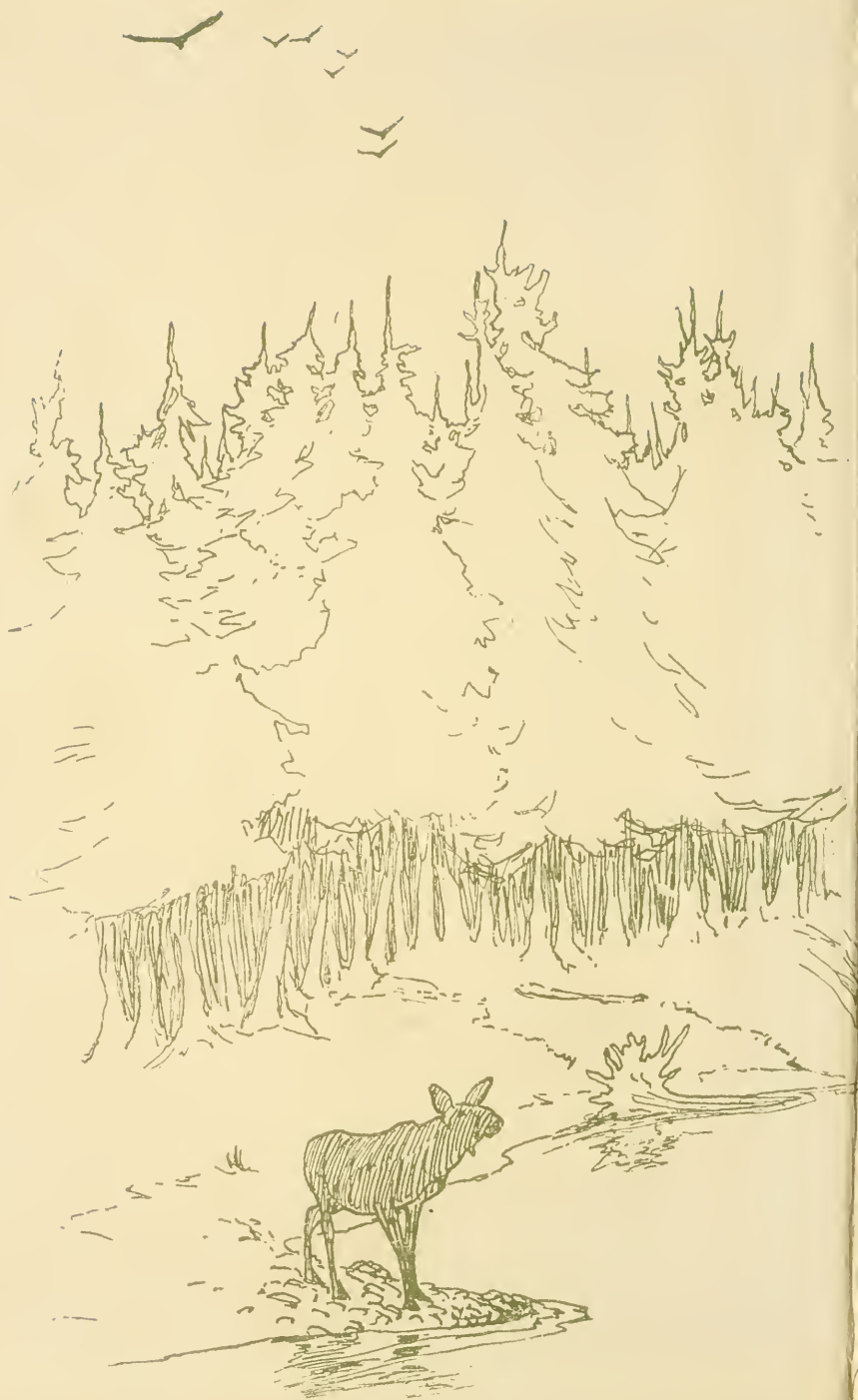


IN THE WOODS AND ON THE SHORE



RICHARD·D·WARE







In the Woods
and on the Shore



“Now although the great pleasure which I got from sport might seem to have distracted me from my art and my studies — and it really did so — yet in another sense it gave me much more than it took away, for every time I went out shooting, my health was much the better for it, the air putting fresh vigour into me. . . . Thus in the end my gun was more of a gain than a loss to me.” — Benvenuto Cellini. (1558 A. D.)

King's Church

4 North Main St

Conferment
mass

From Nathan R. Day
Christmas 1908

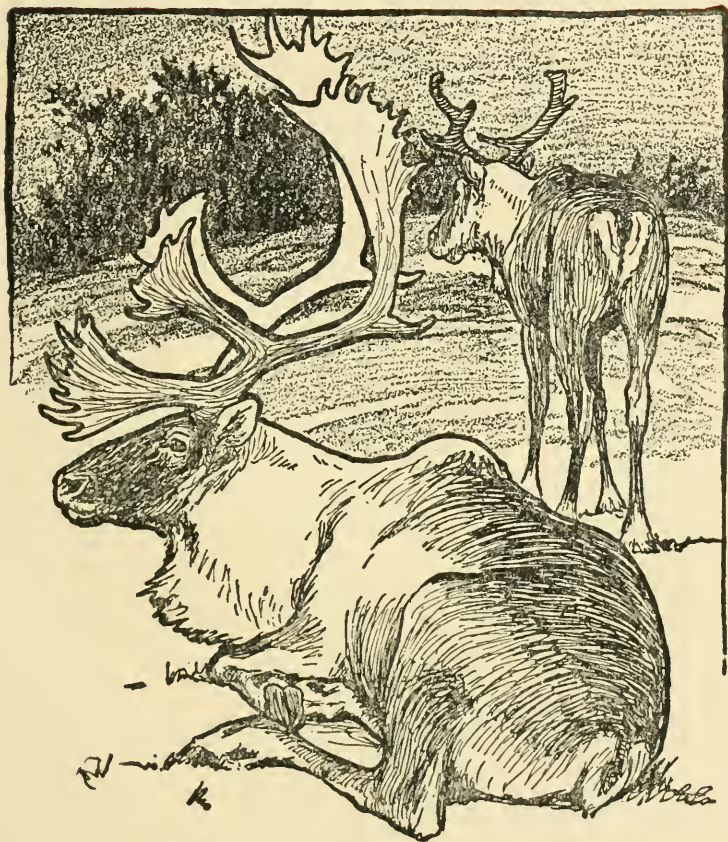


THE DEATH OF THE BLACK MOOSE.

(See page 64)

In the Woods and On the Shore

By RICHARD D. WARE



L. C. PAGE & COMPANY

BOSTON MDCCCCVIII



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TO

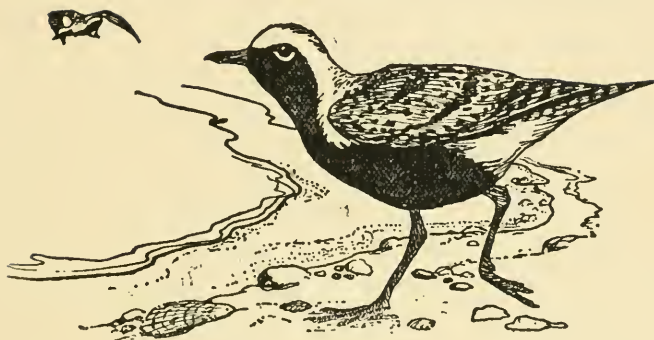
M. J. W.

COMRADE OF THE HOME CAMP AND THE LEAN-TO

TO REMIND HER OF HER FIRST CAMP-FIRES

ON THE BIG RIVER

Introduction



THE desire to express the emotions roused by successful achievement is a primal instinct in all sentient beings. The exulting savage shouted his war-whoop as he waved the trophy torn from his slain enemy and the victorious rooster still crows over the prostrate body of his opponent, noising his prowess abroad through the barn yard. Particularly is this true where the elements of combat or contest have entered

into that which has been achieved, and in the primitive sports of hunting, fowling and fishing something of these is ever present, rarely the combat to be sure in these days of repeating rifles and high power ammunition, but always the contest between the keen senses of the game and those of the hunter, less keen but directed by his higher intelligence.

So it has come about that this desire for expression has brought it to such a point that not only is it impossible for a sparrow to fall without due record, as has been written, but equally so for a grouse, a duck, a deer, a moose or any of the other beasts of the field and birds of the air which are the objects of the hunter's quest.

The hunt is over, but the memory of it is still strenuously alive. The primal instinct comes surging up, transformed into an "irresistible impulse" to take pen in hand, and the deadly trigger finger, so late incarnadined, becomes smeared with ink as the story of How I did It is told again.

And it is well that this is so. What would the catching of the big fish be without the fish story that is born of it? What would the stalking of the big stag be without the story the wide spreading

antlers tell every time one looks at them on the wall?

There is a certain amount of sameness about all these stories of the chase and of the stream, and it is inevitable that this should be so, for each tells only of the pursuit and capture of the quarry by ways and means which have been rehearsed so many times before.

By the same token there is a certain amount of sameness in the doing of the things themselves, but the fascination of it is never ending for him who has travelled on the trail of "The Feet of the Young Men."

So in a less degree it has seemed to me as to the stories. When I have been unable to go after my own ducks, the next best thing was to learn how the other fellow bagged his. When I could not hunt my own moose, it has been a satisfaction to read how the bull gave answer to the call of one more fortunate.

These sketches of happenings in the woods and on the shore are but narratives of personal experience with a little of observation and commentary. They were written chiefly for the pleasure of recalling them and the scenes of their occurrence more vividly to my own mind in

these after days, and with the second thought that as they had interested me so much, they might interest others a little.

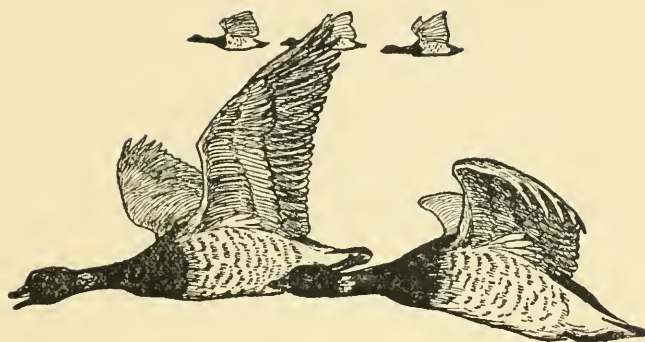
Many of the pictures were taken with my own camera, but I am indebted to my friends James S. Lee, Dwight Blaney, James C. Hopkins, Joseph W. Lund and William A. L. Bazeley for a number of them.

It should perhaps be said that the picture of the wounded caribou is a photograph of a water-coloured enlargement from my own original film, which could not be found when it was wanted. The artist added a few posies to the foreground, but apart from that and the brush marks it is an exact reproduction of the event.

R. D. W.



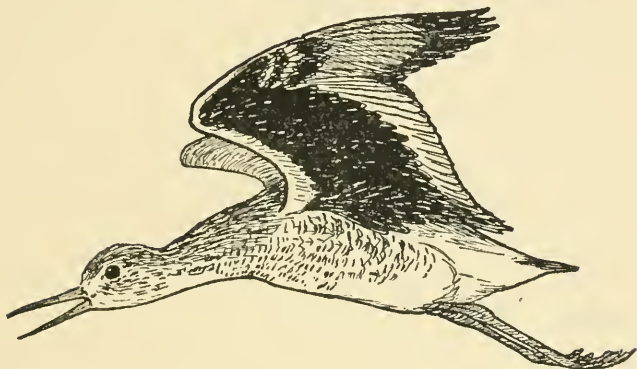
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In the Woods and on the Shore

With the Newfoundland Stags

 THINK it was in '96 that I happened into Frazar's workshop in Boston and saw there the most remarkable set of caribou antlers I had ever gazed upon. I was told they had come from Newfoundland, but that seemed very far away in those days, and even on such evidence it was not until 1901 that things so shaped themselves that a trip could be arranged. My friend Talbot committed himself to the undertaking, and I started preparations by reading everything I could find bearing on the natural conditions of the country and the habits and range of the game during the month of September. It soon appeared that there was very little material at hand which would give

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the required information, but the great impression gained from the sources which were available was that as winter approached there was a great general migration of all the caribou from the northern part of the island "where they feed and bring forth their young" to the southern part, and that in the spring they went back north again for the laudable purposes mentioned. The cause of these migrations was given as climatic like that of the migration of the birds. It seemed obvious, therefore, that during the summer the beasts were all as far north as they could get, which would mass them in the great peninsula which makes the northern end of the island, and that our trip would have to be planned for that country or for some district no great distance to the south of it. On the evidence it seemed as absurd to think of hunting in the southern part of the island at that time of year as it would be to set out plover decoys on Cape Cod in January and for the same reason, — that the game had migrated and had not yet returned. The time at our disposal appeared to be too early in the season for hunting in the country accessible from the railroad, and so after much poring over the map it was decided that the only



MAP OF NEWFOUNDLAND.

thing to do was to get a fishing boat at Bay of Islands and go north up the coast until we reached some point from which the interior would be accessible. By good fortune, in July, before we had made final arrangements, I learned that the friend of a friend was fishing near a station on the railroad in the southeastern part of the island. This was a chance for something definite, and he was written to. In his reply he stated that he saw caribou nearly every day. That seemed impossible, for, according to what I had read as to the migration of the animals, there ought not to have been a caribou within three hundred miles of him. He was cross-examined, but refused to be shaken, and advised us to take his guides after he was through, and come and see for ourselves. We took the chance, and the sunrise of the 30th of August found us on the deck of the swift little steamer that runs across to the island from Sydney, watching the rugged, precipitous coast line of the great island which lay before us.

After the first glimpse one has of the great cliffs back of Port-aux-Basques one feels how out of the ordinary experience it all is. Some of the scenery is superb. Some of it is beautiful in

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the way that woods and streams and lakes are always beautiful, but most of it so full of the stern, wild grandeur which space and desolation give as to be almost oppressive. Those vast rolling expanses of boulder-strewn bog and barren have an indescribable beauty and picturesqueness entirely their own, some idea of which may perhaps be gathered from the remark of the Canadian drummer across the car, who described it as being the most God-forsaken country he had ever seen.

Since the completion of the railroad, parts of the vast interior of the country have been opened up which otherwise would have remained practically inaccessible to any one who did not have plenty of time and a considerable equipment at his disposal, and even now there are districts which never have been explored and probably never will be. There are but few rivers available for even canoe navigation, owing to the abruptness of the water-sheds from the lakes in the interior, and most of them are little more than brooks in the summer. Packing overland through bog at the rate of ten or perhaps a dozen miles a day hardly comes under the head of an amusement for a vacation hunting trip, and the only expedition of the kind that I ever heard of arrived at the

destination on one day, started back the next and starved the last two before getting back to the dépôt camp. It is practically impossible for a small party to travel any distance overland through such a country and pack in sufficient food, together with the usual camp necessities, to permit any extended stay.

It was an eighteen hour journey in the little narrow-gauge train after leaving Port-aux-Basques before arriving at our real starting point, the station of Terra Nova. There we found our head guide, John Stroud of Alexander Bay, with a cook and three packers, and early on the morning of September 1st we started off bound for the country to the westward of Terra Nova lake.

Just a few words in Stroud's memory, for my sturdy old friend died about a year ago. He was born on the island and was somewhat over fifty years old when I knew him. He was a thick-set, powerful man, one of the breed that lifts flour barrels with the teeth in the fulness of youthful strength. He had trapped and hunted at all seasons all his life, for game laws are a somewhat new institution with the Newfoundlanders. While the railroad was building he had hunted caribou all along the line to supply the

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workmen with fresh meat, and he knew the creatures as the shepherd knows his sheep. Nature was an open book to him, and unfortunately it was the only one that he could read, for the mental activity and retentive memory of the man were remarkable, untutored as they were. Nothing out of the ordinary would happen but what he would start on the back trail for the cause of it, and like the Pears' soap baby, he wasn't happy till he got it. Some of his conclusions would be somewhat startling when he would announce them after much obvious mental stress, but this would be only when some bit of false science or local superstition crept in as a premise to his reasoning. When it was a question of Nature's laws and forces, which he had studied and with which he had struggled all his life, his theories were pretty nearly facts. For example, distances continually seemed longer than they really were, and a tree fringed "lead" half a mile across would seem twice as wide, or an animal seemingly a mile off would prove to be about half that distance away as one made the stalk. Stroud figured it out that as the native trees were about half as high as those to which our stranger eyes were accustomed, they gave



JOHN STROUD, WITH FORTY - THREE POINT HEAD.

the impression to us of being twice as far away as they really were, and as the sky line always figures, consciously or unconsciously, in one's calculations of distance, the error in our calculations came from this false premise. I have very little doubt that this was the exact truth of the matter. In his great experience he had learned innumerable things which apparently no one else knew. We argued to him conclusively how it was impossible on any anatomical theory that a caribou stag should have a flat triangular bone in its heart. He showed us the bone in the next one which was killed. No one could have asked for a more jovial and enthusiastic companion or better huntsman, or a more strong and willing worker. The whole of him was at our disposal, offered with a generosity as big and strong as was the man himself.

Our two dories, heavy "bankers," were well filled with our camp equipment, so Talbot and I decided to walk around the shore of the lake with Stroud, a distance of about six miles, and meet the boats at the mouth of the stream which flows into it from George's Pond. The southern shore is a sandy promenade, but it was unavailable for us for our destination, owing to a long arm of the

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lake, which would have to be doubled. The northern shore is a succession of rocks and ledges with stretches of glacier-strewn boulders in between. It was hard-scrabble all the way, and a pretty vigorous breaking-in process, but we finally did it and arrived at the sandy point in time to "bile" at noon. Then came the two miles up the stream, warping the heavy dories through the rapids and across deep pools such as fishermen dream about, apparently without a fish in them so far as we could discover, until we reached the pond. We crossed to the upper end and there made our first camp, about a mile from the edge of the "rocky ground" to the north which we were to hunt the next day. The weather changed during the night and it was gloomy enough when we turned out, with intermittent spits of rain dripping from skies even more leaden than they usually seem in those early hours. Stroud had planned to take our whole force along, which was rather contrary to my own ideas of successful still hunting, so I tossed with Talbot for the first shot, winning it, and we marched out in Indian file up through the wet undergrowth and swinging boughs to the barren grounds. As we went up the steep slope the trees soon became less thickly planted

and the green moss of the woods gradually gave place to the gray carpet of the upland. The hardwood growth stopped entirely about half-way up the slope, and at the top the forest had become but a few scattered larches and spruces along the edge of the great barrens which we overlooked. It was a remarkable transition in a distance which added no more than three or four hundred feet altitude from the level of the lake. As the woods grew more open we came upon a network of caribou paths trodden way below the surface of the moss. We finally stopped by a big boulder which commanded the upper part of the barren, and Stroud went up for an observation. In a moment he motioned to us. We were beside him with a jump, and following his finger we saw three brownish animals walking slowly about on a rocky ridge about a quarter of a mile away. They were all does, but Stroud thought that perhaps there might be a stag with them, lying down behind some boulder, and took us in tow to investigate. We came up within forty yards of them, where we watched them awhile, and then left them, still feeding, and went back to the other men. From there we kept on across the barren to the north and then turned east along the

edge of the forest on the farther side. Within a mile we saw four more does, one with two fawns with her. All at once Stroud stopped suddenly, nearly making ten-pins of our serpentine procession, and pointed to the top of a ridge not far away. There was a caribou, — unquestionably a stag, as we could see his antlers outlined against the sky. In a moment he disappeared over the brow of the ridge, and Stroud and I went after him. When we put our heads up we found he had stopped a short distance down, within easy shot. He looked very good to me, for he had the biggest horns I had ever seen on a caribou at large. But Stroud stayed my hand. "Only eighteen points," he whispered, "not big enough." It took some self-restraint, but on his further assurance that the stag was but an infant from the Newfoundland standpoint, we let the excitement of the chase give way to the pleasures of a feast of great blueberries from a patch in which we found we were lying, which we ate, while the stag browsed on his favourite moss a few yards below us. A puff of wind must have taken our scent to him, for of a sudden up went his head and he trotted off with a snort.

The rest of the day was uneventful, for we saw

but two more caribou, both does, though we made a complete circuit of the barren back to camp, over at least fifteen miles of bog and moss, for Stroud was anxious that we should begin well if covering ground could accomplish it.

The day's experience had convinced him that there was no use in hunting that country again for some time, and the next morning we broke camp to move to more extensive hunting grounds to the westward. The men took the dories about four miles up a stream coming into the upper end of the pond, while we went across on the chance of starting a stag in the woods, where Stroud was convinced they still were. We cached most of our belongings by the dories, to be brought into camp later, and started up the long slope to the highland with what we could pack on our backs. About the middle of the afternoon we arrived at the edge of the new hunting ground, a wide valley in the upland dotted with scattered clumps of trees along its slopes and stretching westward as far as one could see. We were going through a small grove or "droch," the Newfoundland term for it, when Stroud threw down his pack. "Well, b'ys, here's lunch," he said. Beside us were twenty or more great red mushrooms looking as

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poisonous and deadly as so many rattlesnakes, but John gathered them, fried them with strips of bacon, and they were delicious, tasting somewhat like the most delicate calf's liver with a spicy flavour of their own.

As we went along the southern edge of the barren later in the afternoon we saw a doe feeding along towards us, and as our prospective camp was near it seemed a most convenient chance to lay in a supply of fresh meat. We sat on our packs behind a wooded point and waited. Talbot was appointed executioner, as he wished to see what his Krag carbine, recently back from the Philippines, would do as a sporting rifle. In a short time the caribou suddenly appeared around the bushes not thirty yards away. She stopped and gazed curiously at the strange-looking creatures sitting in the grass. The shot was such an easy one that it seemed inevitable that the creature should drop at the first fire, for my friend was a good shot, — but she didn't.

“Lower, Cap'n,” said Stroud.

The second shot had the same lack of result and the caribou still stood where she first stopped.

“Lower, Cap'n,” said the guide again, and this time a tuft of hair went off her back just over

the shoulder. She turned and started off at this, but stopped in mid-career with a bullet in the right place at last. The trouble doubtless was that the service sights carried the ball higher than one would suppose for such a close shot, so that the usual aim on the shoulder was in reality too high. It was fortunate that he found this out so soon.

We were less than a mile from the "droch" in which we were to camp, — a patch of spruce with a brook gurgling along beside it, and sheltered from the wind by a high ledge which overlooked a wide expanse of the valley, making an admirable lookout. Well before nightfall we had the tents pitched, paths cleared between them out to the brook and to the lookout, and a mighty meal sizzling and bubbling over the fire. It grew cold soon after sunset, so cold that ice formed during the night, early as it was in the season, and the men soon adjourned to their tent which had a stove in it, leaving us at our camp-fire. Shortly after, a most remarkable series of sounds came issuing from the glowing canvas walls. George was singing. He had begun on a typical Newfoundland ballad of interminable length telling of shipwreck and disaster "up on the Labrado"

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with a chorus in which all hands came in strong. The solo was a weird banshee wail of a tune, and the chorus of the five men's lusty voices, singing in the dialect of their native bay and each giving a rendering to the music entirely his own, was indescribable. The third repetition ended in what sounded like a howl of mortal agony.

"Let go his hair," yelled Talbot from the fire.

There was silence for a moment and then a great burst of laughter from the songsters.

"Come in where it's warm," cried Stroud, opening the tent door, and we joined our worthy retainers for an evening's entertainment I shall never forget. There were more songs by George, quaint ballads of the country, its people and their hardships and perils, crude and rough enough, but vividly descriptive; stories of caribou hunts and exploring expeditions from Stroud; yarns of "swilin'" (sealing) on the ice after "harps" and "hoods" from the soft-spoken flaming haired Rich, finishing up with a short council of war as to future plans. We decided to hunt in the neighbourhood of camp the next day while the men brought in the rest of our baggage and provisions, and the day after that to go westward

for two or three days in the upper part of the valley. We started out early and had hardly emerged from our grove before we saw three caribou, one a spike-horn. Passing them to leeward, leaving them undisturbed, we came upon two does a bit further on. Later in the morning we saw a fawn of the year on a hillside in our line of march and walked up in plain sight to within twenty feet of him in lock-step behind Stroud, who grunted caribou talk to the little fellow as we approached him. He stood and gazed in big-eyed wonder at the strange six-legged creature that spoke the language of his race, and finally merely trotted reluctantly to one side and watched us as we passed by. We hunted about five miles up the valley through the rocky ridges which made its southern boundary, but saw no more caribou nor any sign of big stags. A bear had been blueberrying on a hill rather recently and we sent one of the men back with a bait for him, but it was never touched while we were in the country.

Stroud was a good deal disappointed that we had not had a chance at a big stag yet, though he felt it was still a little early for them to be out of the woods. He pinned his faith on the coming

expedition and the cook was kept busy baking iron-clad biscuit all the afternoon for the next day's trip. We started off early in the morning with three of the men and light packs, the other two going out to Terra Nova for more flour and other supplies which were obviously going to give out before the hunt was over. We kept up on the ridges we had hunted the day before and then struck across the valley to the northwest, headed for some rocky ridges and barrens lying between Island Pond and Deer Lake. After leaving the higher land and coming down to the level of the valley, the travelling was awful, and one sank into the wet bog nearly to the knees at every step. Small ponds, or "flashets" in the vernacular, glittered in the green expanse in every direction, nearly all of them showing signs of having been the homes of breeding geese not long before. Twice we put up flocks which had not yet gone south. At one we saw where a lynx had raided the helpless goslings, leaving the marks of his pads among the scattered feathers in the sun-dried mud where he had pounced upon them, as evidence of the tragedy. Scattered through the valley were wooded "islands" which served to screen our advance, and as we

neared the higher land we began seeing caribou continually in the openings between them, but still no stags except an occasional spike-horn.

We reached the ridges at last and found them to be a succession of bare boulder-strewn hills with wooded runs between them, separating two beautiful lakes. We took an observation from the first height. I happened to be the Argus-eyed one and soon discovered a stag standing motionless on a ridge about half a mile away. He looked like a good one and I started after him, as I had not yet fired my "first shot," leaving the others on the sunny side of a big boulder. These boulders with which the country is strewn make the only cover one can get for a stalk over such barren wastes, but by keeping behind them as they served, with frequent serpentine wriggings when they didn't, I finally got within range only to find that he was no larger than the one we had seen on our first day's hunt. He was somewhat surprised to see me when I stood up, and after gazing at me intently for a few moments he started off at a swinging pace in the direction from which we had come. I could see our trail through the grass and moss of the bog where we had passed nearly an hour before and

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watched him as he approached it. The stag came within a few feet of it, stopped short and snorted, and then, whirling on his hind legs, was off at a gallop in the opposite direction. It was an unusually good chance to observe how keen the sense of smell of the caribou is, and how much more they rely on it to warn them of danger than they do on their eyesight, which must be defective from what I observed of it. The stag had seen me clearly and had shown no particular signs of fright, while what was left of the scent in our trail in the wet moss had filled him with fear for his life. I went back to the others, and we "biled" in a sheltered nook in the rocks where the wind did not blow and the sun did shine, two most important qualifications for a resting-place on those bleak highlands. We were smoking our pipes afterwards, somewhat careless after our continued ill luck, when we saw a doe coming upon a ridge a few hundred yards away where she finally lay down in the sun. It was a good chance to get a picture at short range, and as it was in our line of march we started off again. I gave Stroud my rifle, and climbed up the ridge to within a few yards of where she lay and snapped her. She jumped and I took another wing shot with

the little camera as she went down the ridge into a strip of woods. The others came up and I changed the camera for the rifle again. I happened to be in the lead as we followed a caribou path into the woods when I suddenly saw a pair of great tossing horns through the branches just ahead of us, and then the head and shoulders of a stag. I fired and the beast kept on. It was like shooting partridges in thick cover. I fired again as I got a second glimpse of him, and there was a crash in the underbrush and a heavy thud. Then there was more crashing and a stag came dashing through the trees on my right, quartering back. I shouted to Talbot and the Krag opened up. The stag was going like an express train through the spruces and larches, and I soon lost sight of him from my position in the thick brush. I was not sure just what had happened to the first one, but pressed forward, and in a moment almost fell over the great beast lying there stone dead with a bullet behind his ear.

"How did you miss him?" came my friend's voice from the thicket.

"I didn't," I shouted back.

He had supposed that there was but one stag in the run, and when the second one appeared

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had waited for me to shoot, which accounted for his failure to score, — a fortunate thing as it turned out, for neither of the stags carried unusual heads. My beast was a large animal with a not large but very even pair of antlers, with 26 points and still in velvet, which settled the question to Stroud's satisfaction that the stags were still in the woods. There was a good camping ground near by, and as it was still early we took a tramp over some of the nearer ridges while the men looked after the game and got things ready, but saw no more game except a flock of geese which rose like quail out of a blueberry patch on a bare rocky hillside.

Stroud had cleaned the head at our return.

The velvet had peeled off very easily, and after a few rubs with some alder twigs they looked as if they had been burnished by their former owner. It was a cold night for one blanket and the brush lean-to, and we were up by sunrise the next morning. Our course lay along the northwest side of the valley. About nine o'clock in the morning we saw our first real herd, a company of sixteen standing outlined against the sky on the top of a bare hill. There was one good stag among them, and Talbot started off on the stalk with

Stroud. The wind was from us to the caribou and the hunters had to make a long *détour* to make their approach. They soon disappeared over the ridge. I watched the animals for a while as they stood there on the hill, but nothing happened. The two men with me were soon sound asleep, and before long I had joined them, for the ground was soft and the sun was warm. Suddenly I was awake again. I had either heard a shot or had dreamed it. The caribou had disappeared from their hill, but in a moment I saw them off to the right of it headed to pass within a couple of hundred yards beyond the next ridge from me. I sprinted to head them off as they disappeared down the slope, but something turned them and when I reached the top of the ridge they were scattered, tails on, out of range for anything except random shooting, so I let them run. I could see the stalkers standing out in the barren about a mile away, so I woke up my men and we started for them. Talbot had a good stag with thirty-one points on his horns, which were still in velvet like the first one. It turned out that as they were stalking the herd, they had seen three more caribou, two stags and a doe, much easier to approach, and had

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turned off for them. There was almost no cover and the shot had been a long one, but it was a hit and the stag had dropped. Talbot told me that the creature was on his feet again in a few moments and started off with the others, they prodding him with their horns when he tried to lie down again. In spite of their efforts he finally got within shooting distance again and it was this last shot which I had heard.

This was most satisfactory. We boiled the kettle, dressed the stag, and decided that as we had had luck enough for one trip and could easily get to camp before night, we would go home with our spoils.

It was well along in the afternoon when we came upon some very large and very fresh stag tracks going on ahead of us as we tramped along in single file on a deeply trodden trail. According to the tracks there were at least two large stags ahead of us, and possibly three. I moved up to the head of the procession, as it would be my next shot under our alternating arrangement. The big tracks kept on until we finally lost them in a particularly wet bog by a wooded island on our right, from which a long strip of brush jutted out parallel to our trail. I stopped at the end of

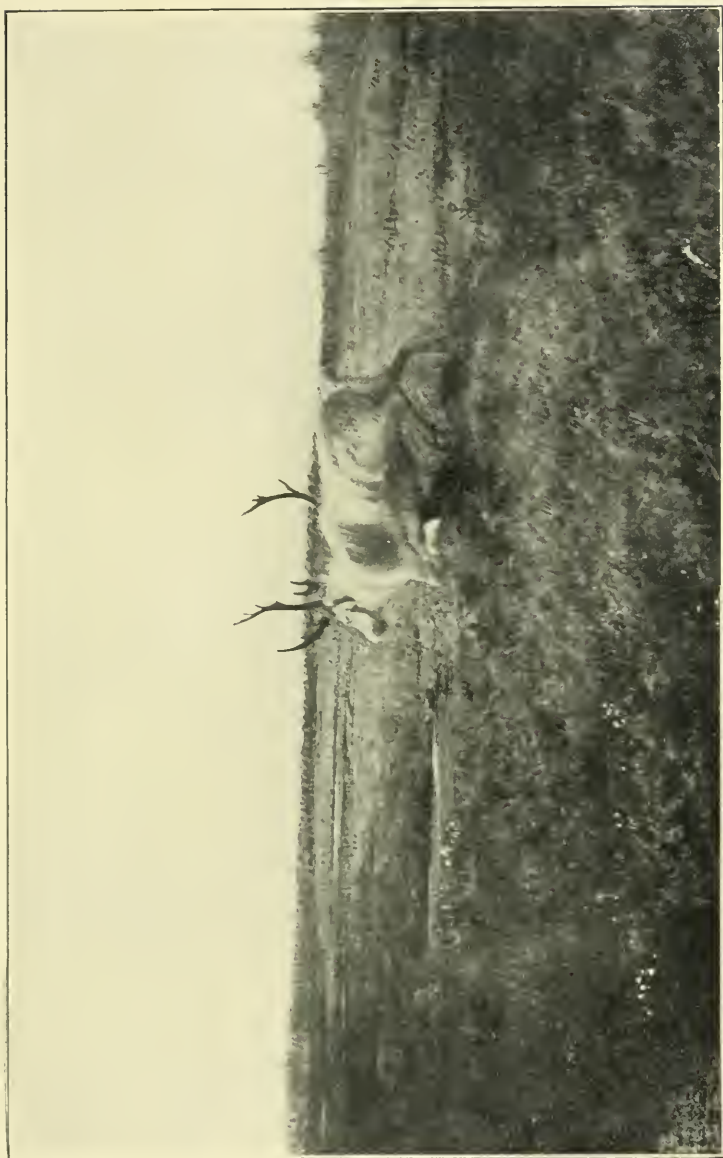
the bushes and looked over them into the bog beyond. There were three stags, the nearest one with a wide spreading pair of antlers, which, with his heavy body and snow white neck, showed he was the kind we were looking for. I stopped the others with a gesture, and they sank down in the moss while Stroud crept up and joined me. He took a quick look at the chances for approach and we started back on our tracks, turning through the brush at the lower end of the wooded island. When we got to the very edge of it the stags had become suspicious and were moving off but were still within easy shot. At the first shot the big stag went down on his off shoulder, but was up again the next instant. A second shot brought him down again with both fore legs under him. The other two stags had trotted off a short distance and were watching us, but their heads were so inferior to the big one that was down that I did not trouble them. We leaped out of the brush and came up to the game. He gathered his great haunches under him and gave a tremendous leap, repeating it as he fell with both fore legs doubled under his body. I found I could keep up with him easily enough, and as he looked entirely fit in some positions it occurred

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to me to try to get a picture of him while still alive. I carried the little camera inside my shirt, and of course it had worked around on my back to the most inaccessible spot it could reach. The caribou was ploughing along with his great leaps, I doing my best to keep alongside, but I finally extricated the kodak and got two snap shots of him. The setting sun and the distant forest for a background with the great wild creature struggling against his fate made a picture that one could never forget, and I was fortunate enough with the little camera to keep it in all its wonderful picturesqueness.

This last head had an unusual spread and height of beam, though but thirty-two points and but one brow antler. Its teeth as well as the bluntness of the points showed that the stag was a very old one, but in splendid condition, with great layers of fat extending over its haunches and well up on to the saddle. The horns were entirely clean of velvet, — the first stag we had seen in this condition, this being September sixth.

It was only about three miles across the valley to camp, for which I was duly grateful, as I had to carry the big head myself, all the rest being well loaded down with our other belongings.



CARIBOU STAG.

We felt that our hunt had been a success, even if we had no more good fortune, and took the next day off to dress the heads, though we kept on the watch at the lookout in case anything should insist on coming to us. As it turned out it was not until the following Tuesday that we took the trail again, still to the westward, but on our own side of the valley, to the ridges between Island Pond and John's Pond. After a few miles of travelling we separated, Stroud and the rest taking a straight course to an old camping ground where he had once been with Paul du Chaillu some three years before, while George and I swung off towards Island Pond to circle back to them later on. The country was more wooded than our first hunting grounds and the "leads" more narrow. We saw three stags, each about the size of the first one I had killed, all within fair shot, but none of them were large enough now, and they trotted away after the usual investigation of the interlopers. George knew no more of the lay of the land than I did, and in trying for a short cut we got well tangled up between two ponds in some thick timber, but we finally came out on the ridges again and found Stroud watching for us a short way from our new camp. The men

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had been busy patching up the old bark or "rind" lean-to, and it was in fine shape when he got in. They had had quite an adventure a short time before. Stroud had been sitting behind a boulder on the ridge where we had found him, when he heard some footsteps behind him. He turned, expecting to see one of the party, and found a two-year-old black bear walking along, nosing at the blueberry patches. The bear saw him at the same instant and bolted for the nearest timber, which happened to be our birch grove. Into it he went and landed in the middle of the camp before he knew it. The cook saw him first and let fly a volley of clattering tins which he was unpacking. The elderly Jacob was nearly knocked off his legs as the beast went by him, but recovered in time to help him along with a parting kick, while "Rich" hurled the axe after him so far into the brush that he thought it was gone for ever when he went to hunt for it. Talbot was reading by the fire when the trouble began and looked up just as the bear was about to hurdle his legs. He jumped and the bear jumped, wheeling behind the tree against which my friend had been leaning, and by the time he got his rifle the bear must have been miles away according to the estimate given of his speed.

It showered a little in the afternoon and we waited until it cleared before starting out, Talbot and Stroud going down into a most promising looking valley of "leads" and "islands," while I kept to the higher ridges alone. I saw a number of does and fawns, but no stags. The others came back late in the afternoon with a beautiful head of thirty-four points with both brow antlers well developed, one of two stags they had found together near a little pond in the valley.

The next morning we started out to hunt towards John's Pond. We had hardly left the woods when I saw a stag coming toward us through the scattered larches, and we crouched down and waited for him to come up within shot. The exhilaration of the early morning seemed to fill him as he came on, stepping high with his head in the air, now and then tossing his antlers which gleamed in the sunshine. He was now within range and he looked such a thoroughbred that I had not the heart to shoot him from my ambush, as I stepped out in plain sight of him. He stopped and looked at me and then turned to run. As he exposed his shoulder I fired and he dropped, but was up again in an instant, rushing across the opening with head down and

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horns thrust forward as if he were charging. The second shot was a miss. He was going hard. The third shot stopped him and he went down, head on, into the lower branches of a black spruce from which it took all hands to drag him. The antlers were a fine graceful set with thirty-three points, high station and good spread, with both brow antlers well developed.

We kept on about six miles north of John's Pond, mostly over high peat bog, seeing caribou continually. About noon it began to rain, and dismal enough it was on those barren, wind-swept wastes.

On the circle back to camp we came upon a place where scattered larches were growing over a considerable area, and we could see several caribou moving in among the trees. To the right of us was a little pond at the foot of a ledge jutting from the higher level, and as we approached it a doe we had started leaped from the shore over twenty feet down into the water and swam across to the woods on the other side. The caribou in the timber were feeding along, headed towards us, and we sat down to wait for them, on the chance of a good stag coming out. We were well to leeward of their course and kept perfectly



CARIBOU AND PTARMIGAN.

still. Eleven of the animals passed us within thirty yards. One of them, a stag with about twenty points, stopped a few yards away, looked us over with no particular interest while he chewed on a mouthful of gray moss, and passed on to the others. The eleven gathered together in the middle of an open barren below us, and as they were in our line we thought we would see how near we could walk up to them in the open. They soon saw us and began to get uneasy. All except the stag ranged up together side by side, facing us. The stag stood out in front of them, now and then lowering his head and threatening with his horns. It was like a squad of cavalry with the officer in command in front. Some signal was apparently given, for at the same instant they turned all to the right about and trotted away, still in perfect alignment though in more open order, the heavier stag bringing up the rear. The bog sloped up a little in their course, and as the beasts appeared on the skyline it suddenly seemed as if an explosion had taken place. The air was filled with flying objects and the caribou were scattering in all directions. What had happened was that the stampeded herd had charged into a large flock of

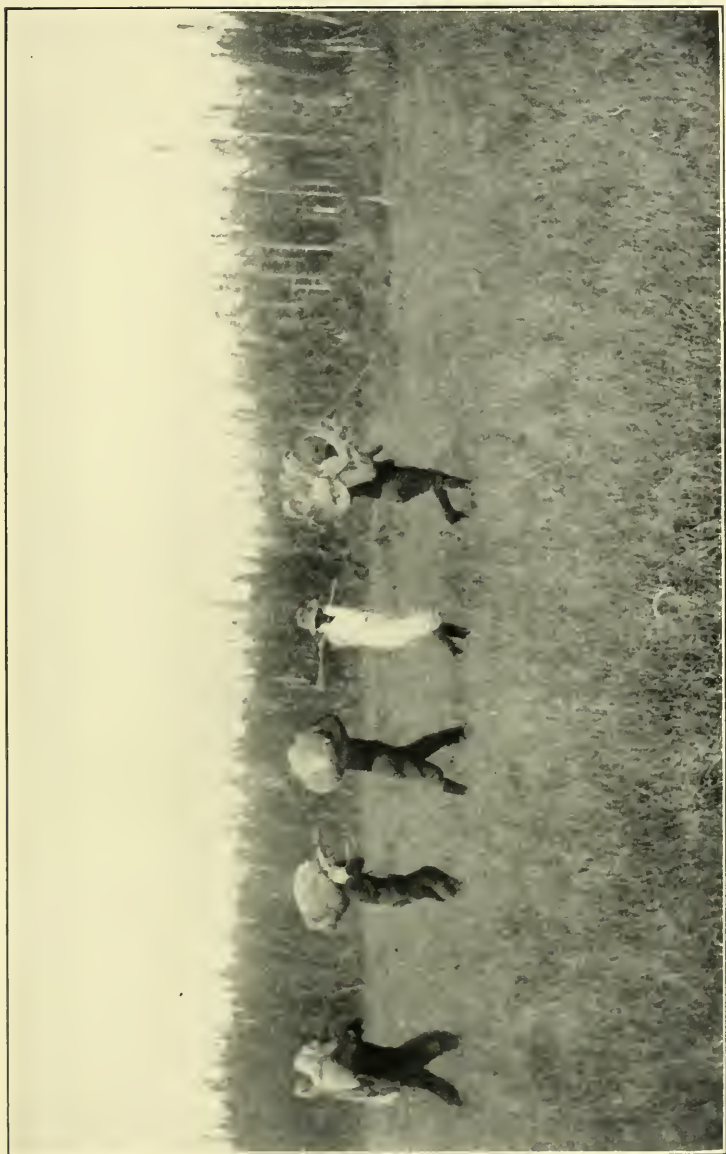
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ptarmigan, to the great surprise of all concerned.

We found a comparatively sheltered place in which to boil the kettle in the cleft of a gigantic boulder split by some great convulsion of nature, and the fire and the hot tea were most grateful, for we were wet to the skin. The storm had stirred up the geese that had still clung to their summer quarters, and flock after flock went by us, bound south, several within easy gunshot range. It was so tempting that I took a chance on the next ones with the rifle and did drop one out of three, closely bunched, which gave a quartering shot about seventy yards away.

It was nearly dark when we got back to camp, which seemed like home after the soaking we had had most of the day, but the cook was ready for us and his prescriptions and the blazing birch logs, cut to extend the whole length of the lean-to, soon set the blood going again, and in spite of the hard tramping and discomfort and the modest success, it has always seemed one of the most interesting days we had. We had seen between fifty and sixty caribou during the day.

We started home the next morning, seeing only six caribou on the way, and the next day was a



OVER THE BARRENS.

day off. It was gray and gloomy when we turned out, and after breakfast we settled down to piquet and pipes in the tent. About eleven o'clock George came down from the lookout and reported a stag on the bog. He thought it looked like a good one. It was Talbot's shot, but we all went up to the ledge to see the stalk if we could. The stag and a doe with him were far out on the bog, but working towards our side. We could see the hunters cross the first "lead" and then disappear into the woods well down to leeward of the animals. In a few moments a lynx bounded out into the bog below where they had gone in, closely followed by a second one, apparently startled at the man-scent to the windward of them. The caribou had come so far over that the trees screened them from us, so after waiting some time to hear the shot, — which did not come, — we went back to camp, thinking they had found the stag to be a small one after all. No one heard anything from the hunters until about an hour afterwards, when Talbot appeared, followed by Stroud, who was carrying the most perfect head I have ever seen. It had forty-six well-marked points with two perfect brow antlers closely interlocked down over the nose. The

middle beams were unusually broad and well pointed and perfectly matched. The back beams were rather light, and in spread and weight of horn it was a smaller head than the big one, but for beauty and perfect symmetry one would hunt long to find its equal. It was a good piece of luck for an off day, and reconciled us to the idleness of the next two, for the weather remained so unpleasant that we decided to postpone a proposed expedition up the valley until it should become more promising. As it turned out it never came off at all, for Stroud was determined on another hunt on our first ground and our time was growing short.

We broke camp and started out to the dories. It was down-hill all the way and we were now well seasoned, so we made good time and joined our returned flour bearers at our first camp early in the afternoon. It rained hard during the night but cleared up finely in the morning before we started for Rocky Ridge. This time we divided forces. It was now my shot again, which entitled me to Stroud's services and company, and I started off with him towards the west along the southerly side of the barren, while Talbot and George crossed over to take the same direction

on the northern edge. We saw no caribou for a long time until we came up a lead which opened into a small barren on a hillside, quite surrounded by woods except for the one opening. At the upper end of it we could see a stag lying down with a doe feeding near by, and even from where we were we could see that he had a tremendous head. The chances for a successful stalk were good, as a little ahead of us an outcrop of ledge swung around to the leeward side of the barren, which would conceal us from the caribou until within good range. Our only fear was that the others might unwittingly spoil the shot by firing at some less noble game or startle the animals by getting to windward of them without knowing their position. This lent wings to our feet as we moved forward, crouching from bush to boulder to gain the sheltering ledge, where we arrived breathless. It was only about three hundred yards to the stag from the place we had gained, and we peered over the rocks at him. He was still lying down and the nearer view showed that he was even a more splendid creature than we had supposed, as he lay there with his white neck gleaming in the bright sun and the great antlers, newly cleaned on the alders, spreading up like young spruce trees.

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Stroud, to whom caribou were as barn-yard cattle, was excited as I had never seen him before.

"He is a king! My God, if they don't fire!" he said.

"Better try him from here," said I.

"No. We can get within forty yards of him. Come on," said he, and was off, I after him.

A spur shot out from the main ledge and we turned to go around the lower end of it. About ten feet below that was a big boulder. We were going along on hands and knees when suddenly from behind the boulder appeared two other crawlers. Talbot and George had seen the caribou from their side of the valley and had come across, in as much ignorance of our whereabouts as we had been of theirs.

I am afraid that for the moment we were not very glad to see each other. I think I said, "Where did you come from?" and that Talbot said, "This is very unfortunate," or words to that effect. Stroud remained tactfully silent. As I have said, it had been our rule to take alternate shots when we were together, and even under that strain on any one's sportsmanship, my friend was the first to say that our unexpected meeting had turned the good fortune to me.

We crept along together under the protecting ledge to a point which would command the animals and moved up over the edge. The caribou were entirely unconscious of our presence, the stag still lying down and the doe standing near him. It was a wonderful picture and my first thought was for the camera, but the sun was in exactly the wrong place for any hope of success, as it generally is on such rare opportunities. We fired together, Talbot taking the doe at Stroud's request, as the men wanted some meat for their barrels which they had brought with them. She dropped at the shot and lay without a movement. For an instant it seemed as if the stag had suffered as little. The great head fell forward in collapse, but the next moment he was on his feet and turning like a flash was off at a gallop. The sudden transition was decidedly disturbing, but a second bullet, ranging forward from behind the left shoulder, stopped him, though he did not go down. I soon came up with him, and wounded as he was, the stag turned towards me with his great antlers lowered and charged four or five steps, when his strength left him and he came to his knees. A moment more and the white haunches slowly settled down upon

the moss and it was all over. He lay there as if he were asleep, with broad muzzle extending on the ground, and all four legs gathered under him. The head was a splendid one of forty-three points, though with but one brow antler, but that one a huge affair with thirteen points, and a front measurement of fourteen inches. The spread was greater than that of any of the heads we had, while in height and contour the antlers resembled those of the elk more than the typical curving caribou horns. Stroud said he had never seen a larger caribou. He certainly must have weighed six hundred pounds, and the fat on his haunches was as thick as the blade of my four inch hunting-knife was long.

It turned out that this was the climax of our hunting, as it was almost bound to be without even more exceptional good fortune than we had had. I had the four stags to which I was entitled, and though my friend's efforts to get his fourth on the next day were without result he came very near it. We started on a long stalk of a very good stag, which necessitated cutting across a wooded island in the barren. The stag was travelling westward, and instead of staying where we expected to see him when we marched from

the woods, worked up to windward of us after we lost sight of him, got our scent and dashed off, trotting by Jacob whom we had left behind on a hill with the lunch pack, within fifty yards of him. This again demonstrated what I have always felt to be one of the essentials of successful stalking, that one should never lose sight of one's game for an instant if it can possibly be avoided.

That proved to be our last chance. We had to start for the railroad the next morning, and though Talbot tramped out the whole way to Terra Nova through a fierce northeaster, he did not see another head. I came down in one of the heavily loaded dories with two of the men, leaving the other two to bring in the meat which they desired to take home with them. We crossed George's Pond easily enough, though it was blowing hard and raining, and ran the rapids in the connecting stream without mishap, but our troubles began at the lake. The wind was blowing a gale and the waves were tremendous for such a body of water, but by dint of all three rowing we made the six miles to the station in a little over five hours, rowing all the time except for ten minutes or so in the lee of a sheltering point.

Talbot and Stroud arrived before us, well content to have been on land on such a day, as they had felt sure we would not attempt the lake, and there was almost no camp baggage in the dory, as we had left nearly everything behind for the others to pack out the next day. The hospitable people at the railroad station took us in charge, and it was not long before the hard work and real discomforts of the day had taken on the guise of actual pleasures.

The trip had been a great success, — better than our anticipations in every way as to sport, guides and even the weather, with seven fine heads and a big bear skin to show for it.

In addition to this we had seen with our own eyes certain things, which, with the information we had gathered from our men, made it seem certain to our minds that the theory of general migration north and south for climatic reasons was fallacious. It was perfectly true that there was a heavy northerly and southerly migration in that part of the island near Howley, and equally true that there was no sign nor past knowledge of such a thing in the district where we were, where the general movement of the animals at the same time of the year was from

east to west through the length of the great valley on which we had been encamped. The question raised by these inconsistent conditions was so interesting that after my return I studied still further into it with the aid of maps and such written observations as I could find, and arrived at certain conclusions which it may not be uninteresting for me to include here.

Before the days of the railroad, hunting parties were limited to the country which they could reach by some water course if they wished to get into the interior. It so happened that the largest river on the island, the beautiful Humber, emptying into the Bay of Islands on the west course through a cliff-walled gorge of wonderful picturesqueness, led to most excellent hunting grounds. That is the country north of Grand Lake and east of the Humber, of which Howley — three tar-papered, barrel-chimneyed cabins along the track at the time of my visit there — appears as the metropolis on the railroad map, the best one there is, by the way, though it is inaccurate in a good many details.

When the railroad was put through to Howley those who had formerly come into the district from Bay of Islands by the river arrived at

their old hunting grounds by the train. They went no further because there was no need of it. They could get all the caribou they wanted there without leaving the tracks. Those to whom the fame of the district had come came to Howley because it was the only place they knew anything definite about. They too went no further because they found there was no need of it, and camped down along the railroad track or went up Sandy Lake stream two miles to the north of it. Probably nine out of ten men, other than natives, who had hunted in Newfoundland up to that time had shot their caribou in the Howley country between the first of September and the twentieth of October, and had never been further east, north or south on the island, and, generally speaking, what I could find about Newfoundland caribou turned out to be a narrative of experience in the Howley or Humber districts between the first of September and the twentieth of October under the conditions which prevailed there at that time. These conditions are, however, peculiar to the time and place. They do not apply to the whole country, and deductions which have been made from them and applied to the movement of the caribou throughout the island are most misleading.

The country lying north of Red Indian Lake, east of Grand Lake and south of the railroad is a great expanse of moss-covered barrens extending north of the railroad through the Gafftopsail region as well. A glance at the map shows White Bay cutting deep into the island on the north coast, leaving but a short distance between its head and the lakes and head waters of the Humber, at this point flowing almost due south. The country to the north and west of this space is thickly wooded and mountainous, with valleys leading into it. The interior of the great northern peninsula is still shown as entirely unmapped, but within a few years I have had the good fortune to talk with a gentleman who had crossed from the west coast to White Bay and back again, continuing north up through the peninsula to Belle Isle, all along water ways on which no white man had probably ever travelled. He had made an excellent map of the country which he travelled, showing innumerable lakes and streams, one of the lakes estimated to be at least twenty miles long. He said that he saw almost no game on his journey, which took place during the summer months. In September caribou begin to appear in the leads in the Howley district, coming

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from the north and headed towards the great barrens to the southward, mostly does, fawns and young stags at first, singly or in twos and threes. As the season goes on they come in larger companies, twenty or thirty or even more together. Some old stags will be with these companies, but they generally lag along behind, as they are heavy and slow moving. This procession to the southward keeps on well through October and then gradually ceases. This is the time when Howley is in its gory glory. The shooters lie on the points in the lakes and ponds which interrupt the line of march and shoot the caribou as they swim by. They patrol Sandy Lake stream in boats and shoot them as they cross. Back from the water courses they camp on the open leads down which the animals travel, and shoot them from the tent doors. If several parties are camped on the same lead, as is frequently the case, the appearance of game is a signal for a free-for-all sprint across the bog for the first shot, a social but hardly ideal method of hunting such splendid game. In the spring the animals leave the barrens and go north again to the great peninsula through which they disperse into its forests.

Let us follow them on their return in the fall.

At a certain point as they wander southward, the caribou coming from the westerly part of the peninsula will strike the northern slope of the mountains north of Bay of Islands, and it is but natural that they should turn along its valley towards the east. This brings them into the narrow space which the map shows running due north and south between the lakes and the Humber on the one side and White Bay on the other. If they wander too far to the east the bay turns them back. If they strike the lakes or river to the west, they follow along their shores instead of swimming them, as the water courses have the same direction as their own. Thus in a way hemmed in, they assemble more rapidly. Their line of travel becomes more obviously marked, and continues through the Howley district just to the south as the topographical conditions have directed it, until the herds arrive at the great barrens, where they scatter about in all directions. It is what one sees when a flock of sheep is driven from the barn-yard through a lane to a pasture. The broad front of the flock converges into the narrow passage where the animals pack in four or five abreast, keeping the formation thus made for some distance after leaving the lane before spreading out over the field.

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The great numbers of animals which were seen by hunters in this particular district at this period doubtless made it seem to them as if all the animals on the island must be passing by them, and soon it was so written. One writer has said, " Their migrations are as regular as the seasons, from the south where they pass the winter, to the north-western portions of the island where they feed and bring forth their young." A few lines further on he says that " in the late autumn and early winter great numbers of deer — caribou — are slain inland from various settlements on the southern shore." So they are from settlements on the northern shores. Stroud had killed caribou in our valley in every month from September to April. We could see another great valley running east and west beyond our northern ridge where he had done the same thing. One of our men told us that he had recently gone inland from the shore near the Straits of Belle Isle and had come upon a barren strewn with innumerable shed antlers. As it is well into December before they begin to shed, there must have been caribou at that most northern end of the island well into the winter, long after the finish of the annual passage of the animals through the Howley district.

As to the brought forth young, the youngsters of the year which we saw had never in the world made the journey from the "northwestern portions of the island" since their several birthdays.

We also saw quantities of small battered trees where stags had been cleaning their horns from velvet that year and in past seasons, certain evidence that they had been spending the summer in the vicinity. There was no doubt that the caribou whose country we had invaded lived there or thereabouts the whole year round. Yet we saw a general westward line of movement at the same time as the southern trend in the Howley district. This fact with others satisfied me that the cause of the movement of the beasts was not climatic, and on my return the courtesy of Chief Moore of the United States Weather Bureau furnished me with a number of recorded observations which I think bear this out. Perhaps the most significant is the chart published by the Deutsche Seewarte of Hamburg. This gives the average temperatures of the north end as compared to those of the shore as follows:—

	<i>North End</i>	<i>South Shore</i>
February	— 7° C	— 2° to — 6°
May	+ 1°	+ 5°
August	+ 13°	+ 16°
November	— 2°	0° to + 3°

The figures for the south shore give the range of temperatures along the coast westward from Cape Race to Cape Ray.

The international simultaneous observations as summarized in Weather Bureau Bulletin A give readings from the charts of average isotherms for air temperatures for the years 1878 to 1887, which show the average temperature for the year to be 36.41° Fah. at the north end of the island as compared to 38.33° Fah. to 41.66° Fah. on the south coast.

The comparatively slight variation which these figures show would hardly seem to be sufficient to cause the migration of creatures so well qualified to stand the rigours of a cold climate as are the caribou. Let us consider a full year of caribou life as nature's records, as well as those of many observers, prove it to be. The young caribou is born in May or early June in the woods where the doe has betaken herself after the manner of most wild creatures when such events are approaching. The instincts which have led to banding together in the open country in the fall have lost their force and the desire to be alone is the ruling motive in both sexes. The doe with her fawn has all she can attend to and wishes not to be dis-

turbed. The stags begin to grow their new antlers about this time, and their sore heads and tender horns make them sulky and unsociable. The ardour of the deer flies, which bite both sexes ferociously and with entire impartiality, is much lessened by the coolness of the woods and their concealment, and all these things, together with the greatest reason of all, that the trees and bushes are producing a fresh and succulent food supply, lead the caribou to take to the woods as summer comes on, and there they stay until natural conditions are on the verge of change and new instincts begin to work within them.

About the last of August the does find their fawns are pretty sturdy youngsters. They can feed themselves and run from danger fairly well, and the maternal solicitude consequently abates considerably. They doubtless think it would be pleasant to go out into the open country again and see other does and their fawns and things generally, most usual desires in the feminine which need no further exposition. The young stags, whose spiked or pronged horns have grown more quickly than the great branches of their elders, are filled with vain desires to exhibit them to some appreciative doe or to try them on another

stag, and they too drift out into the barrens, joining the does and the fawns which have preceded them. By the tenth of September, and generally a few days earlier, the elder stags will have stripped the last velvet from their antlers and polished them on the trees. One can almost always tell what the summer environment of a stag has been from the colour of his horns. Those that are dark coloured have been rubbed on spruces or junipers which have exuded pitch upon them, upon which the dirt has adhered and been rubbed into the horns. The lighter coloured antlers have been cleaned on alders or birches and have absorbed the more liquid, greenish juices. The old stags have had their horns literally on their minds all summer, and their purpose dimly begins to dawn on them. They are not yet the truculent beasts they become a few weeks later, for one often sees several old stags together at this season, but they are prepared for the coming frays and come forth into the open country where they join those already assembled, as they have picked up others here and there as they have wandered about. The old stags are the last to put in their appearance, but by the first of October practically all the caribou have left the wooded

country and are scattered about in the open. The breeding season continues through October with battles royal between the great stags for supremacy over the different herds, until, the demands of nature for the continuance of the race being fulfilled, the beasts lay down their arms, or, to put it less metaphorically, their horns drop off, and they settle down to more harmonious conditions for the winter on the barrens, for here they find the deep gray reindeer moss which makes their favourite food supply now that the woods have ceased producing. The winter winds blowing over the great expanses ordinarily keep the snow from covering the moss too deeply for the animals to get at it by pawing. They spend the winter wandering about looking for thin places to feed in, substituting the black moss on the spruces for their more usual provender, when some fierce storm drives them to take shelter in the woods. The snow finally melts away and the trees begin to leaf out again in the spring. One beast after another yields to its new-born instincts, leaves the herd and goes back to some familiar haunt in the woodland to begin another cycle in its existence.

I think it is without doubt that these migrations,


to adopt the phrase, amount to nothing more than the assembling of the caribou on the barren grounds which may be nearest their summer quarters, whatever the direction of their course for arrival there may be, for the purpose of being near an ample food supply during the winter. The spring movement of the animals is but their subsequent dispersion to the woods again in the furtherance of the demands of their existence.

These few facts and conclusions may serve to let the truth prevail for its own sake, and to encourage sportsmen who may be contemplating a visit to the island to branch out from the beaten track for their game. There are half a dozen water ways accessible from the railroad leading into the central and southern parts of the island which have been practically untouched, and the hunting there would be honest stalking instead of mere killing in the water and on the leads.

Since this has been written it has been a pleasure to read the most recent book of that Nimrod of us all, Mr. Selous. It had not seemed of special interest to say that on our return to Terra Nova station we saw a canoe crate with his name on it lying on the platform and learned that he had gone up the Terra Nova River into the country some

miles to the south of us two weeks before. Such was the fact and his new book tells of his successful and interesting experiences most delightfully. The important thing is that his observations made on this trip and on another to St. George's Lake in the southwestern part of the island several years later led him to the same conclusions as my own in regard to the fallacy of a general northerly and southerly migration of the caribou in Newfoundland.

The Black Moose

T was the custom for each to take his own guides and hunt separately, making trips of two or three days down the Nepisiguit, or back from the valley into the hills that extended as far as one could see on either side of the river, where the best possibilities for bears and caribou would be. On the morning of the fifteenth of September I had returned to the home camp after a fruitless night watch in the alders at a bogan down the river for the chance of a shot at a moose. The night had been indeed a watchful one, for we had apparently encroached upon the happy hunting grounds of a pair of great-horned owls which flitted like gigantic bats from one dead tree to another, with demoniacal screams. As the hours passed our eyes would close for a moment only to be jerked back to wakefulness by the next call from one of the two sleepless ones. It was nearly dawn before either

True North
Scale 1/4 miles = 1 inch



the guide or I got the semblance of even a nap, and that came to a sudden end as we sat up wide eyed, a wild shriek ringing in our ears, with rifle in hand, thinking that the cat of the mountains was upon us, just as one of the owls left its perch about six feet over our heads. I had never understood before just why the great horned owl was called the cat owl, but that night made it clear enough. Such a night made a day of rest in camp, with perhaps a few casts in the river for the day's sport, seem a sufficiently strenuous programme, and after breakfast my guide and I were soon making up the last night's loss of sleep.

About noon my friend Lund returned with his guides, Sam Gammon and his cousin Len, splendid fellows, both of them, from a trip into the hill country back of our camp. He reported that there was a little pond in there just at the edge of where the green woods ended and the open plains began, and that they had seen a cow moose feeding on the shores of it on each of the three days of their stay. Where there are cows the bulls are pretty sure to come sooner or later, so they had waited patiently but with no result, and had come out again for more provisions, intending to return that afternoon and watch the pond that evening. They

had done no calling, as it was rather early in the season for it to be effective in all probability, and with the cow in the neighbourhood it seemed wiser in the guides' judgment to rely on her as a live decoy rather than do anything that might tend to disturb her and frighten her away.

My friend wanted me to go back with them. I told him of the experience of the night before and of my own plans for the day, which even after the morning's sleep seemed much more attractive than the six-mile tramp up over the hills which he proposed. He was still hospitably insistent, but in spite of the always infectious and never flagging enthusiasm of my would-be host, I remained firm, and explained to him that I was going to a new pond the following day where great events were certain to take place.

"And in addition to that, Joe," I informed him, being driven to the crude truth, "having now travelled something like two hundred miles in fourteen days without firing a shot, I see no particular purpose in travelling still further merely to see you kill your moose."

"Perhaps there may be two of them," he said.

"Is that your honest belief?" I asked.

"You take the shot if there is one."

"Not at all," said I. "It's your moose if there is one. Go ahead and get him."

"We'll match for him," he answered. He looked around to see if the guides were within ear-shot. "Honestly, I wish you would come," he said. "I've been up there with the boys three days and nights, and they're all right, but we're talked out. They are cousins and both know the same yarns, and I've told them all I know. We sat around the fire last night like mummies, and I want somebody to talk to."

No one could resist such an appeal as that.

"All right, I'll go," I said.

"Good! we'll match now," he answered, for he, like the great French critic, believes in "action, action, toujours action." It so happened that this most excellent means of foreordination and the administration of justice could not be literally carried out on this occasion, for I was the possessor of the single coin in camp, a small Canadian silver five-cent piece which I carried in the watch pocket of my trousers in deference to my one superstition that it is for one's welfare that silver in one's pocket and the crescent of the new moon should be in conjunction, particularly on a hunting trip. Sam was summoned to put the

wheels of fate in motion by tossing the coin. "Dates were heads," and if so it fell the shot, if any, was to be my friend's. To reverse would award the chance to me. The coin spun in the air and the face of the good queen looked up at us from the moss. Winning is always pleasant and a look of satisfaction came over my friend's face in spite of his real unselfishness in the whole affair. I was satisfied too, for the date is on the reverse of the Canadian silver coins, which my friend had forgotten for the moment, but his always present optimism rose above even this stern decree of fortune.

"Good work, good work," he cried, smiling as joyously as if he had been the lucky one, then adding, "Perhaps there may be two."

My own guides were not at all cast down at the prospect of a two days' loaf, and we left them comfortably smoking their pipes in their lean-to soon after lunch. The first part of the way was easy going enough, on level ground through scattered larches and princess pines. Then came a ravine cut by a brook which rose far up in the hills. We scrambled down the steep side, lowering ourselves by the slender birches to the water's edge, where we all followed the maxim of the

woods to always eat and drink whenever you can, as you never know when you will get another chance. Across the brook the real climbing began, straight up the mountainside through the thick timber. Hands were in play as well as feet as we pulled ourselves up the steep slope by the trees. The afternoon was warm and the blanket roll I had improvised for the trip as a substitute for my heavier pack began showing a devilish ingenuity in swinging into the wrong place at the wrong time. As we went higher up the trees grew less closely together and the rocks more frequent beneath our feet as the soil grew thinner. Here and there were open places where small avalanches of earth and rocks, dislodged by the frost, had fallen from the outcropping ledges above, making sharp and uncertain footing for our moccasins. From the edge of one of these sunny openings two spruce partridges flew up into a tree, from which Len quickly brought them fluttering to the ground with well-directed stones, while we sat and caught our breath and watched him. There was no need of a partridge gun with Len in camp. David with his sling was no more deadly than he, and rarely a day went by that he did not bring down some victim of his primitive artillery.

It was not far to the top of the mountain and we soon gained it, a desolate boulder-strewn knob of weathered granite. We stopped a few moments to look about us. Straight before us spread the open plain stretching far away to a wooded ridge to the north. Nothing but lamb-kill and a few blueberry bushes grew there since the forest fires had swept through years before making the country what it was. A mile or two to the left the green woods showed against the sky line all along the western boundary of the barren land. On the eastern side a high rocky ridge arose, making the plain seem more like a valley than the high plateau which it really was. About a mile away at the foot of the gentle northerly slope of our mountain was a line of green running into the dull tints of the open country, and beyond that a rocky hill on which a number of dead trees still stood, gray and fire-scarred.

“The camp is beside the brook down where those trees are, and the pond is just beyond that hill,” said Sam.

We picked up our packs again and took the line through the rustling lamb-kill and over the innumerable fire-scarred windfalls lying half-



COW MOOSE IN POND BACK OF THE ELBOW.



LOOKOUT AND WESTERN END OF POND BACK OF THE ELBOW.

concealed beneath it. Everywhere were game trails trodden deep in the soil by generations of moose and caribou. One of these, so clearly defined as to be almost a road, led in our direction and soon brought us to the camp.

The lean-to was in a pocket between the hills, close to a lively little brook, with plenty of small birch and poplar trees for fire-wood at hand, and was altogether most attractive. All it needed was a moose head lying somewhere about, and after a mouthful to eat and a pipe, for the hour of return was uncertain and further smoking taboo, we left Len to keep camp and started for the pond.

We halted at the top of the hill and looked down, hoping to see the cow moose at least, but she was not there. The wind was blowing gently from the west side of the green woods, which was as we would have it, so we bore to the eastern end of the pond and made our stand in a little hollow in the bushes from which we could command both shores. There was little to do but wait, so we made ourselves as comfortable as we could and waited. I know nothing more stimulating to the imagination than such a situation as that. For one thing the silence of the wilderness is something that no one can understand who has

not experienced it. Felt it would be a better term, for it is almost an active force rather than the most passive of conditions. Psychologically the premises are something like this. You are looking and listening for a moose. An approaching moose breaks twigs, — not many, be it known, — and strikes trees, — not so often as one would think. Therefore the breaking of a twig and the striking of a tree means an approaching moose. In the silence of those places you not only hear the breaking of real twigs and the striking of real trees, caused by many other things than the approaching moose, but you hear the breaking of twigs when no twig has been broken and the striking of trees when no tree has been struck. I remember having been roused to great excitement by the almost soundless squeaking of my companion's leather belt. I remember too having grasped my rifle at the grunt of a beaver beneath me in his house on which I was sitting, waiting for an answer to a call. That evening, as always, and as it always may be I trust, we heard the breaking of twigs and the striking of trees and the things which were not, at each occurrence more certain than at the last that the appointed moment was at hand.

The sun went down behind our western sky-line and in a moment winter was upon us. It grew bitter cold and any warming movements were out of the question. It grew darker too, but the half-moon had risen in the east behind us, casting its reflection on the smooth surface of the little pond and lighting up even its farther shore where the forest met the plain. It grew still colder, though it was only about seven o'clock. My friend decided that the chance of even one bull appearing was slight, to say nothing of two, and started off for the warm camp fire, leaving his rifle for Sam in case of any emergency. Still we waited. What little wind there had been earlier in the evening had gone down and there was not the rustle of a leaf to be heard. To the left of the little pond the fire had thrust into the green woods, leaving a good many standing stumps in the sort of bay it had formed, which had grown up with small birches and poplars. Suddenly we heard a sound from that direction as if some old fallen tree had been ripped or torn. It certainly had been caused by some moving thing, and our ears and eyes were on the alert in an instant. Sam thought that it was a bear tearing up some old stump for the ants concealed beneath it, but a bear would do very

well if he came our way. We neither saw nor heard anything for quite a while after that, and it seemed the more probable that it had been a bear starting out on his nocturnal foraging.

Then our hearts leaped within us, almost into our throats, as another sound rang out. It was as if something broad and resonant had struck upon one of the old dead trees, and we knew of but one thing in the woods that answers that description, the wide palm of the antlers of a bull moose. The place from which the sound came was much nearer than the source of the other noise, and it was almost certain that the animal was coming to the pond. It would be impossible to shoot seated as I was, and I rose to my knees with rifle in hand, straining my eyes into the darkness. I could hear Sam's heart beating as he knelt beside me, his face set and grim.

It was impossible to keep such tension long. My hands grew terribly cold on the metal of the rifle, and it seemed wiser to lay it down again and keep my fingers warm and unstiffened in the folds of my sweater. Still we knelt side by side like two acolytes, and prayerfully too, though I fear our prayers were somewhat pagan in quality. However that may have been, they were soon answered.

Noiselessly and all at once a great black creature suddenly appeared at the side of the pond, standing in the thick brush that rose breast high about him. Not a cracking twig, not a rustling branch had warned us of his coming. He must have stood there several seconds before the shape of him loomed against the darker background and made impression on my mind, eagerly as I had watched the very spot on which he stood. A sharp intake of breath told me that Sam had seen him too. I kept my eyes fixed on the great creature and groped for my rifle. As I lifted it from the ground the bull stepped out from the bushes on to the beach of the pond with head erect, keenly on the alert. The moonlight outlined him against the glistening water and the black background of the forest, and made his great upspreading antlers gleam like metal. He was headed a little toward us and seemed to feel that all was not right up in that direction. It was impossible to clear the bushes for a shot kneeling, so moving as noiselessly as I could I stood up in plain sight of him and fired at his shoulder. The echo of the shot resounded from the hills, but still he stood there without a movement. It took but an instant to throw in another shell, but as I did it he made a tremendous

leap straight out into the pond. The moonlit spray dashed up around him like drops of silver as he made a second great leap and rose on his legs for a third. In the moment that there was for any thought I felt that I must lead him, and as he rose for the third leap I aimed at the bull's neck and fired, figuring that he would lurch into the shot with the shoulder as he came up. Never have I seen such a result of a shot. High up-reared as he was, he stopped short, staggered for an instant, all bathed in the moonlight, and fell with a tremendous splash that seemed to send the shining drops higher than the dark tree-tops behind him. In a moment I had another shell in the rifle and was at the edge of the pond. There was not a sound except those of the little waves the mighty splash had made, and I knew that I had killed my first bull moose.

As I turned to look for Sam I received a terrific thump on the chest from that young man, which he repeated with his right hand as he held me by the shoulder with the other. His face was about six inches from mine, but it was another face from the strong, virile, good-natured one which I knew. Two piercing, gleaming eyes were looking into mine from a countenance that was as hard

and lined as if it had undergone the depths of human experience.

"I'm proud, I'm proud," he repeated with reiterated thumps.

Then in a moment his coat was off and his other clothing coming.

"Hold on, Sam," I urged, "not to-night. He'll stay there till morning."

He stopped in his disrobing, and then as if coming out of some trance-like state,—

"I guess he will," he said.

He did. We went back to camp, clearing the hidden windfalls as if they did not exist. As we saw the glow of the fire through the trees Sam let go three shots in joyous salutation. Our companions had heard our firing and their shouts of congratulation mingled with the echoes of the salute. They had waited supper for us, and as they had soon decided that we had been successful after hearing the first two shots, Len had been inspired to make a great pile of well-browned "flippers" in honour of the occasion. They vanished like mist before the sun. Then the pipes and the talk that my good friend had yearned for, yards of it. First I told how it had all happened with amendments by Sam, then Sam related the

great event with additions and explanations from me. Then answers to the many questions of our companions, and then all of it over again.

We were eager to get a good look at our game and I think we all slept lightly that night. Every time I shut my eyes the wonderful pictures that I had seen recurred again, and it was far into the cold silent night before they left me, sleeping. After an early breakfast we started for the pond again. From the hilltop we looked down into it and for a moment the most awful "gone" feeling came over me, for there was apparently not a thing in sight, but Len soon discovered a broad blade sticking up from the surface of the water a little farther out than I had supposed it would be, and we knew that all was well. The water in which the bull had fallen was about waist deep, as we found when we waded out to him to drag him ashore, and cold as ice. By dint of much twisting and tugging we got the great neck turned so that both antlers were clear from the bottom, giving the three of us a better hold for towing him ashore. It was by no means an easy process. All three would lift the head and neck as high as we could and pull with all our strength. Each effort was good for about six inches headway, as



HARD PULLING.



RETRIEVED.

the heavy body would lose the slight buoyancy we could give it in that short distance, but eventually we accomplished it, and then with blocks and levers improvised from the old dead trees, moved the creature well up on to the shore. In taking off the neck skin we found the second bullet close against the thick hide on the left side of the neck, where it had lodged after shattering two vertebrae and the spinal cord, and the cause of the sudden finish of that great leap was clear enough. Just behind the right shoulder was the hole made by the first bullet, ranging back diagonally through the body, a mortal wound in itself.

We took what meat we could carry with our other belongings and started back to camp for lunch, and in the afternoon took the homeward trail, Len carrying the head skin and Sam packing the skull and antlers. We stopped but once on that wild descent of the mountainside, and how he carried them as he did, steering the broad pointed blades between the tree trunks and through the brush, I have never been able to understand. He insisted that I should come into our camp in triumph with the trophy on my back, and when within a discreet distance I

shouldered it. It was quite far enough even then, and my feat was as sixty yards to Sam's six miles.


Of course there was great excitement. The other member of the party had returned from his expedition, and that night the big bull was slain again for him. It was a big bull too, the largest of a number I have seen dead or alive since then, as well as the eye could judge, as it was impossible to weigh him. He was a big black fellow, with a bell fourteen inches long. The antlers were large and heavy, and quite unusual in that the palmation began at once, without the more frequent brow points separate and distinct from the palms, the horns spreading out in two great blades rising straight upward and backward from their bases, making their spread of fifty inches slight indication of their actual size and symmetry.

It so happened that seven years after this I was in the same country again and had the good fortune to see another splendid head, killed only a few miles back from the little pond. These antlers showed these same marked characteristics, and coming from the same district as they did, there would seem to be almost no doubt that this bull must have been a direct descendant of that royal line.



HEAD OF MOOSE KILLED ON THE NEPISIGUIT IN SEPTEMBER, 1906.

Shore Bird Shooting

HE boy living on the New England seaboard generally makes the pursuit of the different varieties of beach or marsh birds his first adventure into the world of sport when he goes forth with his first, long awaited gun. The probabilities are that his shots will be few and his game the smaller sandpipers and plover, classified as "peep" by the shore gunner without further discrimination, but if the boy is the right kind of a boy he will learn even from this that the smaller the target the closer one must hold the gun, and that the little brown and gray birds are many and various in kind, with habits and characteristics well worthy of his consideration. Some day in August or September, as he tramps along the beach or through the marsh after a northeast storm, he will bring his first beetle-head or yellow-leg to bag, "potted" possibly, that no such marvellous chance may be

lost, but after a stalk which only his hard apprenticeship could have taught him. His bird book with identified varieties carefully underscored tells him that there are places where such splendid birds are plentiful, and sooner or later, if he remain keen and the fates be kind, he will get to some one of them and see what shore bird shooting really is.

My own experience was very similar to the one suggested, which is probably one reason, apart from any others, why the sport is still so attractive to me after good success with finer game. The miles that I tramped as a boy along the coasts of Maine and Massachusetts are staggering to the mind to-day, but every one of them was on the right road, and the little birds that flitted enticingly before me as I followed on were the first guides into the great Out-of-Doors, where the happiest days are always waiting. I remember perfectly the pride of conquest in my first bag, two semi-palmated sand-pipers and a ring-neck, slain with a single barrel gun down on the Cape. My first "big bird" was a flighting "winter," dropped yelping on to the mud flats of Cape Porpoise, where soon after I missed the first curlew I had ever seen, two "jacks" sitting on the bare

sand beach, over which, for some unknown reason, they permitted my approach nearer than I have ever been able to walk to "jacks" since then.

My first golden plover was shot on the Charles River flats near what would, now be the Cambridge end of the Harvard bridge, hardly a promising hunting ground to-day.

So it is that the marsh and beach call up innumerable reminiscences, clean cut as first impressions always remain, each of them a then new experience now always to be remembered, and it is perhaps this co-mingling of the past with the living present which comes in these hunting grounds which were first made known to me that lends them their peculiar attraction.

The localities frequented by the shore birds are not ordinarily regarded as attractive in themselves. The long white sand beach has a certain dreary individuality of its own like a bit of the Sahara, chiefly appreciated by the dweller in the city who resorts to it and its neighbouring places of entertainment on his Sunday holiday, but that is not the beach resorted to by the shore birds, for it is the mud flat rather than the bathing beach that seems good to them, and yet, unpromising as it sounds, the mud flat may be very beautiful indeed.

In the early morning one sees the flats stretching away to the distant low water mark, a vast lead-coloured desolation. As the dawn approaches the lead turns to silver, with iridescent gleams appearing here and there on the wet surface as the pinkish hues of the morning are reflected from it, increasing in frequency and lustre until the whole expanse is glowing with the sunrise like a gigantic opal. As the sun sets, its alchemy again transmutes their base material with the richer tones of the evening, making a picture ever changing as the shadows creep slowly onward. Such things one may see in the home of the shore birds.

The beauty of the broad green marshes, dotted here and there with little ponds and puddles, needs no commentator nor defence, so whether the shore-bird shooter builds his blind upon the flats or on the marsh, or better still at the point of contact between the two if circumstances permit, there will be pleasure to his eye and soul, whatever the bag may be. There is a sense of spaciousness and freedom in such surroundings too which is grateful. It is nearly all sea and sky and solitude, the little damp spot on which he sits being all that pertains to earthly



ON THE FLATS.



A MARSH STAND.

things, and that same little spot has always seemed to me about as near to Nature's lap as one could come.

I may have suggested that the flats and marshes were the only haunts of the shore birds, but there are exceptions to all rules. In some localities, where flats predominate, the birds betake themselves to ledges or neighbouring islands as the tide rises, to remain there until the feeding grounds are exposed again. In such places the changing of the tide is the all important factor in the shooting. Indeed, the movement of the birds is affected by it to a greater or less extent everywhere, with the general experience that the better shooting will be had on a rising tide, which will restrict the feeding grounds and keep the birds more on the wing.

The most remarkable high-tide resort that I ever saw, though only the smaller birds came there, used to be, and probably still is, a high gravelly beach jutting out boot-shaped into Machias Bay in Maine. At low tide there are hundreds of acres of muddy flats exposed about the bay, where great numbers of peep and ring-necks are scattered about busily feeding. As the tide rises, which it does in those waters to the

height of about twenty feet, flock after flock would leave the feeding grounds for the high beach. Arrived there they would not run about as one sees them on the flats, but would sit closely bunched together, headed up wind, generally in about the middle of the widest part of the beach. As the flocks came in they would light down with the others already assembled until the multitude made a great brownish patch on the lighter coloured gravel. They would be silent and motionless, except as a bird too crowded by its neighbours might flutter into the air for an instant, and but for some such occurrence one might have looked at a flock containing hundreds of birds without seeing that there were birds roosting there at all, so motionless were they, and so well did their neutral tints blend with the colours of the small pebbles and gravel all about them.

It is difficult to give an idea of the number of birds that were sometimes there, but I remember an impression I received one afternoon which may be suggestive of it. I was standing in the doorway of a farmhouse where I was staying, looking off to the west across the bay at the beginnings of the sunset. It was very still and the tide was high. The bird beach lay in the middle distance

about a mile and a half away, the purple hills at the head of the bay being perhaps five miles beyond the beach. Something distracted my attention for a moment and when I looked again there was a new feature in the picture. Ascending from the beach, with its upper end high over the horizon of the hill-tops, rose a dark columnar cloud like a tornado or waterspout, waving slowly hither and thither from an apparently fixed base. In a few moments it slowly lowered into itself and the birds were at roost again. It certainly took a great many small birds to make a sight like that.

When we went after the birds we would plan to arrive at the beach at about three-quarters tide, when the greater part of the flock would have assembled. After disembarking on the shore, keeping heads well down, there would be a preliminary observation taken to see if the flock were within shot. If so we would charge in together, and when the cloud of birds arose, shoot into it with both barrels. There was little skill in it, and, after the marvel of the multitude had become familiar, little sport either, but our elders at the hotel liked peep pies, and we youngsters supplied them bountifully.

After such a shot as this, or immediately, in case the birds were too far in the middle to be reached from the bank, each gunner would take position in one of the rough blinds at the three corners of the beach, and take toll as the big flock swung by, seeking for a new roosting-place. The birds would not stand this long, and soon the beach would be clear of them, most of them going to refuge on reefs farther up the bay. Then they would begin to come back again, now in small bunches going like the wind, and this would give some real shooting. No decoys were used, so the birds were always in full flight when we shot, and it was quite surprising at times to see how easy it was to miss a wisp of the hard flying little fellows. Occasionally they would leave the beach after the first few shots and not come back at all. Once, while shooting alone and the expected peep pie still incomplete, I followed them to the ledges. On one of these the birds had packed themselves to the water's edge, so closely that it was only the telltale flutter of a wing that showed that they were there at all. They rose, hovering as we sailed by, and with the double shot the pie was assured.

There is a story about an old-time gunner who

claimed to have shot ninety-nine peep with one discharge of his old queen's arm. A doubting listener asked him why he didn't call it a hundred while he was about it.

"Do you think I'd lie about one darned sand peep?" queried the aged one.

I shall profit by his experience.

The Magdalen Islands in the Gulf of St. Lawrence had become familiar to me through my reading as a famous place for shore birds, and in 1892 I had the good fortune to join forces with my friend Abbott, who had already made two trips there and consequently knew the ropes. He was a keen sportsman and shore-bird shooting was his specialty. His blind was somehow always in the right place. His decoys always showed up better and more naturally than the other fellow's and when the shot came "Mr. Abbott was a terrible man in a flock of birds," as a wondering boatman once said of him. This last was because he had learned to know by the flight of a bird whether a shot was the only one he would get, or whether he would gain a better one by waiting, giving a soft call or two, and letting the bird take another circle to the decoys. He could tell that this straggling flock, following its drooping-

winged leaders, would turn and bunch into the wind, giving a raking shot if one waited for it, while the flock following it would give but a chance for a double at best. All these things can be learned and my friend had learned them, so that my real introduction to the sport of shore-bird shooting over decoys was made under the best of auspices. To my satisfaction it developed that one hitherto unappreciated accomplishment of my own put me more nearly on a par with my companion than would otherwise have been possible. I could whistle and he could not. He was using one of the tin affairs to be bought at gun stores, but time and again the natural article was the more seductive, and it has been my experience that it always is in the long run.

Our bird shooting ground was a marsh on the outer beach across the lagoon from Grindstone Island. The marsh was so cut up by broad shallow creeks, exposing much muddy surface at low water, that it was a favourite feeding ground, and the condition of the tide made little difference with the shooting. At high tide the birds would resort to the little marshy islands or fly across from the more solid marshes at either side of us, and at low tide betake themselves to the muddy

channels. This was our destination each morning, sailing across in a terrible boat, which nearly ended our careers on two occasions. I chose a little green island for my blind, Abbott building his farther in-shore on the solid marsh. This difference in location, slight as it might seem, was a very material one in its results, for though our bags did not differ greatly in numbers, he killed the greater number of the more desirable varieties, particularly of the golden plover. Where the shooting grounds are flats leading off from marsh a gunner on the flats will kill species which his companion back in the marsh will never see within gunshot, except as a straggler may come along, while the gunner in the marsh is bagging quite different varieties. The beetle-head plover seems to resort equally to the marsh and the flats; the jack curlew, the grass-bird, and both the yellow-legs more generally to the marsh, though sometimes to the flats; the golden plover to the marsh, or higher land, almost invariably, though Mr. Job speaks of seeing them on the flats. On the other hand, the turnstone, the "red-breast" and the "brown-back" are birds of the beach and flats, and the marsh has no charms for them. So it happened that of the few golden plover that came

our way at all, the majority were to Abbott's gun. The flocks which had come on the marsh were tending far back, almost to the edge of the beach grass on the dunes, and his stand caught them, only three or four small flocks swinging out so far towards the outer edge as to come within my zone of action.

What would have been my best chance, properly attended to, was badly managed, and a single bird was the only result of it. The shooting had not been very stimulating, and about the middle of the morning I was lying back in the blind reading a book, relying on the call of any approaching bird to give me time to receive him. I happened to glance up over the sea-weed barrier towards the decoys and saw what looked to be twenty or more black dots bobbing about in the air just over them. I reached for my gun, and at the movement the flock of golden plover that was hovering there, breasts on, wheeled before my astonished eyes, and whirled down the wind like a flash. Only one straggler dropped, but in a few moments I saw them turn in to the other stand, where they left about a third of their number. They had come in to me low down over the marsh and silently, but from the

position they were in when I first saw them, they must have offered a wonderful shot a moment before, when they came up into the wind to the decoys. The plover were only on the beach two or three days, and then they departed as suddenly as they came. On one of these days I saw an unusual thing happen. There were always a great many hawks about, of great help too, in keeping the birds moving, and I was watching one small hawk flying about near my stand when of a sudden he poised and pitched at my flock of tin decoys. Down he came with outstretched talons and struck his intended victim full on its painted back. It must have jarred him to the foundations. I could hear the scrape of the sharp nails on the hollow metal, and looked to see a very mad and disappointed hawk fly up into the air again after such a fiasco. Not at all. He teetered on his strange perch for a moment, gained his balance, and after looking at me as if to say, "I was going to alight here anyway," began preening his feathers as calmly as you please. After he had remained long enough to assert his unruffled dignity, off he flew, to pursue perhaps more timorous but certainly more toothsome victims.

Our first day on the marsh was the best one we had there in point of numbers. That pleasant feature of the sport, a varied bag, was present too, with ten varieties of the so-called "big birds" in our score of forty odd birds to our two guns. It was an off year, according to my friend's past experience at the islands, and as the marsh grew steadily poorer, we went on a two-day expedition to Amherst beach, on the other end of Grindstone, a vast sandy expanse flooded at high tide up to the beach grass, from various channels running in from the ocean. It was low tide when we arrived on the beach, and though we could see bunches of birds far out on the edge of the water, looming up like small ostriches in the heat haze from the sand, there was nothing to do but build our blinds on the ends of two grassy points and wait till the tide drove them inshore. Soon it began to rise, and so level was the surface of the sand that the water was at our stands sooner than it seemed possible. We could see the wading birds take wing as the water became deeper, dropping down again as they could find firmer footing, only to be up once more as the tide gained on them. The sight of the decoys standing in the peaceful shallows by the points could not be

resisted, and soon there began the liveliest bit of shooting I remember. It was almost all at single birds or pairs, beetle-heads, red breasts, a few "winters" and turn-stones. Almost the opening of the ball for me was the appearance of a pair of godwits, the first I had ever seen, which swooped in over the decoys calling loudly. Down they came to a most satisfactory double. While it lasted the birds came to me thick and fast. Abbott was equally busy at his point, so that when the flight was over we had some fifty birds to our two guns.

That night I remember we spent in a deserted, but still well inhabited fishing hut on the beach. I was immune, but my friend had a bad time of it, so that we were both out by daybreak. I shall never forget the sight of the gannets fishing off shore from us that morning. There was a heavy black cloud lowering in the sky, and against it the great birds, soaring in big circles without the movement of a wing, gleamed like snow-white crosses. Every moment some one of them would fold its wings and drop head first into the water, coming to the surface to bolt its prey if the dive was successful, or flapping upward to the heights again in case of failure. The gannets made the

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day one to be remembered, though I have quite forgotten what the shooting amounted to, for there was little of it.

Indeed we had no good shooting after this, perhaps ten or a dozen birds a day to each gun, but no more. Later experience has told me that this was partly our own fault, for I have to admit that we were rather lazy and were rarely in the stands before eight or half-past, whereas under ordinary conditions one will see more birds between sunrise and nine o'clock than during all the rest of the day. The shooting at the Magdalens did not come up to my expectations, particularly the golden plover shooting, but that is uncertain at best, even there, where one is told they used to come in countless thousands, but the journey was enjoyable and the accommodations under the hospitable roof of Madame Arseneau were of the best.

As I looked back on the trip I could not help wondering what our sport might have been if we ourselves had been just a little earlier than the birds o'mornings, but it was three years afterwards before I could test this question, and then not at the islands, but on the northern shore of New Brunswick.

Another shooter of shore birds who had tried the Magdalens with no greater success than my own, had sought for more accessible shooting grounds as the map might show them, and finding certain promising features on a bit of the northern coast of New Brunswick took his way there. His deductions proved correct, and he and his companion had some excellent shooting, so good indeed that three of us were ready enough to go with him on his next visit. When we arrived there, three other men we knew were already on the ground, and yet so extensive was the shooting area and so varied the pursuits that were open to one thereabouts, that the number was no detriment at all. One of our predecessors devoted himself to the excellent fishing in the river and the neighbouring brooks, while the rest of us generally hunted in couples, two on the beach for the shore birds, two in the sink-boxes, and the other two at ponds in the so-called "black lands" for ducks. We were all stowed away in a capacious farmhouse, the homestead of a fine old Scotchman and his family, who did everything for us that one could ask. The house was on a point just where the river emptied into a broad shallow lagoon, across which, about four miles away, was the outer

beach, a narrow strip of dunes at the lower end, but widening into extensive marshes on the inner side to the north at the upper end of the lagoon. At low tide acres and acres of this great area were left bare, or so slightly covered that the larger birds could wade almost everywhere except in the very channels. The rise of the tide is not great in St. Lawrence waters, and on our shooting grounds we only got the top of it. On a strong northwest wind the rise would be hardly perceptible. Indeed I have seen the flats in the lagoon bare for two days at a time, while a northeaster or a southeaster, pushing the water back up the bay, would frequently submerge the lower levels of the marshes. Three long marshy points jutted out into the flats, about half a mile apart, and on this visit we did all our shooting from blinds built on the ends of these points. The water was quite deep at high tide, though not too deep to wade about, and this necessitated extra long decoy sticks, as the decoys are always set out in water if it is a possible thing. The sticks I used were made of stout dowels thirty inches long, instead of the short useless spindles supplied by the makers of decoys. One can always push the stick down into the mud as far as desirable, and I have

used this length ever since except for setting out on a high marsh, where sticks a foot long are long enough.

My first shooting day was on the second of September. The better way to reach the shooting grounds was thought to be to drive about six miles to a little French settlement at the head of the bay and go over in a boat from there, a distance of about a mile and a half, rather than to take the boat at the house landing, for unless the wind happened to be fair for sailing the clumsy "canoe," it meant long, hard poling through the heavy eel grass which grew all over the deeper parts of the lagoon, making grand feeding ground for the ducks, brant and geese later in the season. It was about half-past three in the morning when we left the house, for the sun rose about five, and we wished to be in our blinds by then certainly. It was unusually cold for so early in the season, and the aurora was darting about in the northern sky in all directions when we started out. It soon began to grow lighter, and the east was rosy when I landed at the middle one of the three points, my friend going to the lower one where he had made his biggest bag the year before. I could hear yellow-legs calling back on the marsh behind

me, and an occasional whistle of a distant beetle-head as I piled up the sea-weed for my blind. The tide was full flood, and about to turn. The wind was northwest, straight in my face looking directly out into the lagoon, so I stood my decoys in deep water a few points to the north, where they could be seen clear of the point by birds coming from either direction. I had been told that most of them would come from the north, and so it happened. I was hardly settled in the blind before the sun shone full over the low dunes behind me and the marsh became alive with birds. Unseen curlew began calling to the north and south of me. Flocks of sandpipers whirled up out of the grass, their white breasts flashing as they turned into the sun's rays, dropping down again as suddenly as they had appeared. Yellow-legs and beetle-heads began passing up and down the back of the marsh, alighting at favourite feeding places which I was to discover later on, but too far away to hear my calls or notice my decoys. I began to think I was in the wrong place when the hailing signal of a "winter" rang out clear and shrill, and I saw four of the birds sailing up to my decoys. Two crossed and dropped to my first barrel, and a third one to the second shot. The survivor,

nothing daunted, hovered in among the decoys, dropping its long legs to find footing in the deep water, and kept at it so pertinaciously that I was reloaded in time to bag him too. Then came a pretty flock of red-breasts flying close in along the edge of the marsh, so low that the grass concealed them until they were almost at the decoys. A soft call slowed them up, and as they wheeled into the wind with wings set, equally satisfactory results ensued. So it went on through the morning. Birds were in sight all the time, and though of course they did not all come in, yet while a bird is on the wing and calling there is always hope. The "winters" were more plenty than I had ever seen them, and there were sixteen of them, fine and plump, in my bag of forty-two when the flight stopped. The rest were mostly red-breasts, with several beetle-heads, a few turn-stones, and by good luck, one golden plover, the only one I saw. It was all over by about eleven o'clock, so we pulled our decoys and splashed over the flats out to the boat, anchored nearly half a mile from the point, but barely afloat even there, now that the tide had gone out. My friend had not done so well as I had, for his point was sandy and so less frequented by the

yellow-legs, but our joint bag of between seventy and eighty big birds was a splendid sight to see, and the strength of the early morning theory was clearly established.

The next day I was in my same stand again. It was a red-breast day, the yellow-legs being less plentiful than the day before, which was perhaps not unnatural, in view of the toll I had taken of them. Small flocks of red-breasts kept coming in from the north, with now and then a beetle-head or a "winter" or a bunch of turn-stones to add variety. One flock of about twenty came in finely, and just as they doubled I gave them both barrels, dropping nine among the decoys, the survivors wheeling off up the bay. About half an hour later I noticed three floating objects drifting down on the outgoing tide, and on going out to them found two more red-breasts and a young beetle-head, which I had not noticed in the flock, which had dropped out afterwards. This shot made my bag for the day a little bigger than the day before, each in its turn the best I had ever made, and my new shooting grounds stood high in my estimation, as may be imagined. The other men were having fair success with the ducks and trout, and I joined forces with them for a few

days before going back to the beach again. Then I found that the shooting had fallen off greatly, just as I have since found it always does about this time, when the flight of the old birds has passed on, and the later starting young ones have not yet begun their travels, but soon the birds were plentiful again, particularly the grass birds and the young beetle-heads or "pale-bellies," as tame and easy to decoy as their sooty elders are wild and suspicious. I did not equal my first two bags again, but after the short interval between the flights one could always feel certain of a morning's sport, with the probability of seeing some unusual happening out there among all the birds to lend a zest to it which even three o'clock breakfasts could not pall.

The memory of it led me to the beach again the year afterwards with my friend Codman. We arrived about the twentieth of August in the hope of striking the flight of red-breasts which would be due some time during the next ten days, if it came at all. We lived on the beach in the upper story of a deserted lobster factory until it became clear that the flight had passed us out to sea, with good, though not remarkable, shooting all the time, but without the one big day we were

looking for. It was on this trip that we saw the flats bare for two whole days, the strong northwest wind keeping the tide from rising in the lagoon during all that time, and later, when the wind had shifted to the northeast, looked out at daybreak from our loft to find the marshes covered to the beach grass.

While we were there five other men we knew came to the farmhouse, and as five of the seven were going home together it was arranged to make the last day's shooting an eventful one. During the evening before a list was drawn up of all the varieties of birds which had come to bag and a pool made on each. No one had shot a goose, so it was left off the list, but black ducks, teal, golden plover, beetle-heads, curlew, and so on down to turn-stone, were duly scheduled, the pool going to him who should bag the greatest number of each kind. Certain individual propositions were also made and accepted, so it was with considerable interest as to what the day might bring forth that we went on our several ways beneath the stars early the next morning.

I was in my old stand on the middle point, and it soon became evident that I was not destined to shine preëminent in the pool taking. Codman

on the northerly point was doing quite well, apparently with the beetle-heads to judge by the whistling from his direction, while the men on the southern beach were keeping up a continuous bombardment. It was not very exciting at my stand, and there seemed little prospect of its becoming more so, as the tide had left the flats bare far beyond my decoys. Such were the conditions when I chanced to raise up in the blind and looked behind me. A great bird was flying low across the point not two hundred yards away, and the first glance showed it was a Canada goose and a big one. I dropped into the stand again, with one eye strained at the big bird over the top of the sea-weed, while I looked in my shell bag with the other for some number 4s, the largest shot I had. As the bird went on it looked as if Codman might get the shot, but suddenly the goose set its wings and alighted on the flats about midway between us, equally inaccessible to either over the bare expanse. There was nothing to do but await developments, and by good fortune they soon came. A little mackerel gull came swooping along, and spying the goose, pitched down at it, striking at its head. I could see the black neck bend back as the goose dodged the

onslaught, which was repeated again and again by the whirling midget in the air. The goose was soon tired of it, and with a honk of protest at such behaviour it rose in the air and turned down the wind directly towards me. As soon as I saw its course was taken, I flattened against the wall of the blind and waited. In a few moments there he was, about thirty yards to the right, and then a grand splash into one of the little pools of the marsh echoed the report of the gun. It was a fine bird, doubtless one of a flock that had recently come into the bay, but why it had left its fellows to give me such a chance I do not know, for it was in splendid condition and showed no signs of any wound except the last fatal ones.

Late in the evening we were all back at the farmhouse again, where the birds were arranged on the piazza, the noble goose, nine black ducks, a teal, and one hundred and six "big birds." After dinner, on which the daughters of the house had surpassed even themselves, came the awarding of the pools. Codman had hopes with his nine beetle-heads, but they vanished before the string of eighteen which Sturgis brought from the lower point, most of them fine old birds with breasts as black as coal. Means was an easy winner of the

turn-stone event, and Abbott with the red-breasts, these two having been the bombardiers I had heard on the south beach, but it little mattered, for though unrewarded except by the knowledge of my own superior virtue, the good gray goose was mine.

The visit to the hospitable farmhouse became an annual affair after this for several years. The early rising necessary to reach the shooting grounds from the house, and the dirt and discomfort of the lobster factory, suggested that a comfortable tent on the beach would be the solution of the problem. We would pitch our tent on our first coming, and leave it and the camp equipment when we got ready to go ashore for some trout fishing and the greater creature comforts of the farmhouse until we should come back again. It seemed better too to give the birds an occasional rest rather than to keep after them every day, and the unwritten rule became two days on and two days off during the week, and as we would be the only gunners about we could do this and be the ones to get the benefit of our temporary forbearance. The visit in the year after the episode of the goose was less successful, as the red-breasts, which generally made the greater part of the bag,

did not come at all. Only two occurrences stand out from the general pleasant memory of the trip. I had built a stand back in the marsh at a small puddle hole, and was sitting there with little doing one bright calm morning when I chanced to look out over the swaying grass off to the right. There was a long line of large birds, fifty or more of them, flying close to the marsh. I did not recognize their flight, but as they came nearer I saw by their long curved bills that they were "jack" curlew. On they came, slowly, in an oblique alignment and without calling. It seemed best to keep perfectly quiet, as they were still coming in my general direction, in the hope that they would see the decoys, but as it became obvious that this was not to be without further effort, I gave two or three soft calls to turn them if possible. In an instant they wheeled and came into the wind, making a mass of birds that a six foot disk would have covered. Then they wheeled into line again, then into the mass formation once more, a few of them now answering my calls, and all the time edging up the wind to the decoys. The possibilities were great, for they had undoubtedly seen the decoys, and might come piling in at any moment. Unfortunately they did not.

Still edging up the wind, they worked above me, then turned and came down in a straggling line behind the stand, going like bullets. I turned to meet them, waited for two to cross for the first barrel, and dropped a third with the second, which was as good as one could ask under the circumstances, but yet so far from what might have been if they had only acted just a little differently. So it often is, for there are many forces at work to bring about the "psychological moment" with a flock of shore birds.

On another morning I was in my old stand on the middle point. It was perhaps ten o'clock, and what little movement of the birds there had been was apparently over. I had heard one of my companions firing quite frequently back in the marsh, apparently getting good sport, so that my twelve birds looked rather small. Soon I heard him shouting to me across the marsh, inviting me to exchange stands and share in his good luck. I declined the kindly suggestion, it being then within an hour of taking up the decoys, and we sank into our blinds again. In a few moments I saw a bunch of birds coming towards me across the water. They paid no attention to the decoys, but crossed behind me and were out of range for my second

barrel. The one shot that I was able to get in added six turn-stones to my bag, however, and a few minutes afterwards a still larger flock of the same birds, behaving in exactly the same way, left twelve of their number on the marsh. Thibedau, our guide, philosopher, friend, cook and boatman, soon waved the signal for lunch at the tent, where my friend took considerable satisfaction in his bag of something over twenty birds, one of them a doe-bird, by the way. How I had acquired my thirty was a mystery to him until the tale of the last three shots had been told. On that same visit I had the unusual experience of seeing a Wilson's snipe pitch to my decoys, and light among them in the mud within a dozen yards of my stand.

The best shooting I ever had with the shore-birds was in the following year. Codman was ready for another expedition by that time, and our friend Hopkins joined us. Again it was about the twentieth of August that we left the farmhouse for the beach late one Sunday afternoon, for the blue laws of the Bluenoses prohibit travelling on Sunday before six o'clock except for necessity or charity, under neither of which heads could our voyage across the lagoon be classed. It was calm



LUNCH!

enough when we started, but heavy clouds were gathering, making a most gorgeous sunset, and several flocks of geese dropping into the ponds on the "black lands" gave further evidence of a change of weather near at hand. By the time we reached the beach it was black enough and a light rain was falling, while by the time our tent was up and our belongings brought from the boat it was raining pitchforks and blowing a hurricane from the northeast. We had had our supper, so there was no need of a fire, which was fortunate, as it would have been impossible to make one on the wind-swept beach. We sat in our oilers by the dim lantern light in the tent, which dripped gently down upon us, making the best of it by assuring each other that the storm would certainly bring the birds. Finally the tent stopped leaking as the fibres swelled, and we turned into our blankets in the darkness, while the sea pounded on the outer beach and roared at us like Behemoth. Along in the middle of the night down came the tent, and it was all hands out into the deluge from the wreck to make repairs with great sticks of driftwood placed against the ridge-pole on the leeward side. It was raining hard and blowing heavily when we started out after what was by

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courtesy our breakfast. Hopkins was the new arrival, and we wished to give him the best chance, so my old stand on the middle point was allotted to him. Codman had memories of the beetle-heads on the lower point where Sturgis had won the pool of two years before and chose that location, while I decided on a fresh water puddle hole back in the marsh where I had made good bags at various times. It was a hard tramp straight into the wind and beating rain, laden as I was with oilers, rubber boots, decoys and shells. When I arrived at the old place the puddle had disappeared, dried up so completely during the summer that even the heavy rain then descending had as yet made no depth of water in it, and there was nothing to do but to keep on. There was another puddle hole still containing a few inches of water at the edge of the dunes and the marsh a little farther on, which seemed as good a place as any, so dropping my impedimenta, I set out my decoys and looked about for material for a blind. There was nothing anywhere near me that would serve the purpose, so I gave it up and sat down back to the rain about fifteen yards away from the puddle without cover of any kind. I had seen no birds while coming up the marsh, but as

it grew lighter overhead I began to hear faint reports from my friends' guns on the points and knew that the birds had begun to move. Soon a few black specks appeared against the gray sky, growing larger as they approached against the wind, and in a moment a small bunch of summer yellow-legs was over my puddle, scaling and pitching down to the decoys. One with each barrel was the best I could do, as the strong wind prevented them from bunching, and the next moment they were gone. Soon two more black specks appeared, and a pair of "winters" dropped their long yellow legs for alighting. As they came to bag in turn, things seemed more promising. All that morning there was a continuous flight of yellow-legs beating up the marsh from the south. The larger flocks passed by overhead, calling loudly to the decoys in answer to my whistling, but not stopping. The smaller bunches, pairs, and single birds, gave almost continuous shooting until I was out of shells, and when I went back to the tent they were still coming. I had shot badly, but the conditions were some excuse for it, encumbered as I was by my oilskin coat, while the heavy wind made the birds shift and veer in their flight like twisting snipe. However, I had forty-

six yellow-legs of both varieties and one stray turn-stone, when the shells gave out. By this time the rain had stopped and the clouds were breaking up, which was grateful after the experiences of the night. My two friends were at the tent, Codman with forty-six red-breasts, with one barrel of his gun out of commission since early in the morning, and Hopkins, for whom we had intended so well, with only six birds, all red-breasts. He reported that flock after flock came in from the north, going behind him across the point just out of range. Codman caught them after that and could probably have doubled his bag with the use of both barrels. It kept on clearing and all that day the birds kept going by, the yellow-legs from the south, back of the tent on the marsh, the red-breasts from the north, out over the now uncovered flats. We could have had good shooting all day long if we had been so inclined, but enough was enough and we let them go without further molestation.

The next morning came in with a most wonderful sunrise, the remnants of the storm clouds making strangely beautiful effects in the eastern sky. As there seemed to be few yellow-legs on the marsh, I forsook my puddle hole for the northern



AFTER THE FLIGHT.



ON THE BEACH.

point to catch the red-breasts, and our total bag was larger than the day before. Codman had tinkered his gun into usefulness again, and Hopkins found my former praises of the middle point fully justified by his experience that day. On the upper point I made the best bag yet, fifty-six birds of different varieties, the red-breasts predominating. All that afternoon again these last were feeding on the flats near our tent in hundreds. The next morning there was hardly a tithe of them left, but what there were, with the other birds, gave us a third excellent morning's shooting, and after lunch we started back to the house again after an experience I had long waited for, — a migration in its full strength of numbers.


My last visit to the beach was three years ago, and a second time it proved an off year until the last two days before I returned home. There had been no northeast storm to drive the flocks ashore, and after the time when the first flight must have passed us the warm weather still held on, so that there were practically no birds for a number of days. A foretaste of winter must have come somewhere in the northland, for of a sudden one morning the flats and marshes were musical with piping and whistling once more. There were two

guns out the first day of it and three the second, with a total of one hundred and sixty-seven birds, a good proportion of them fat young "winters" and "pale bellies." In my bag on the last day was the first doe-bird I had ever killed, dropped by a lucky shot just as it flew into the glare of the early sun. It was a beautiful bird, so fat that its skin could hardly contain it. I brought it home with me for the special delectation of a girl who had once rashly promised to eat anything I would shoot. On a certain afternoon shortly after my return I carefully plucked my doe-bird, and that night it was done great honour. Later that fall Mr. Bangs, the naturalist, told me that this doe-bird was the only authenticated specimen killed on the Atlantic coast that year, so far as he had been able to ascertain. The birds are well-nigh extinct to-day, plentiful as they were only a comparatively short time ago, in part, possibly, through some catastrophe in their northern breeding grounds, but more certainly owing to their continued slaughter during their spring migration up the Mississippi valley.

It was fitting that the shooting of such a rare and excellent bird should come as a climax to my efforts with the shore-birds, for I have not followed

them since that day, but even as the " feet of the young men " grow restless for the distant places where the Red Gods make their medicine, so do mine turn towards the marsh and beach as the summer begins to wane. I can see the old stand on the middle point, and across the lagoon the long low skyline of the woods, beneath which the setting sun used to sink so gorgeously. I can hear the yellow-legs and the curlew and the beetle-heads calling from the marsh back of the white tent, and it all seems good. At all events it is good to know that they are all there waiting for me.

The Beach

 HE gleaming constellations fade away
Till in the east alone the morning star
Shines like a beacon on the outer bar,
And lights its pathway far across the bay.

Into the sea the curtains of the night
Roll down, tinged roseate ere they disappear,
While overhead the opal sky grows clear,
All radiant with the great sun's dawning light.

Out of the gloom, as far as eye can reach,
Blending with sea and sky into the mist,
Where the wide bay and river keep their tryst,
Looms the dark shadow of the long low beach.

All desolate it lies save here and there
A weather-beaten hut, where in the spring
The fisher folk their hard won booty bring,
And make rude shelter till the winds are fair.

A band of horses, scattered lowing herds
Of cattle turned half wild roam there, alone
Of all the beasts to claim it for their own
And hold a tenure in that realm of birds.

High in the air, arrayed in echelon,
The honking geese come from their northern isles.
Across the sky in undulating files
Long lines of sable cormorants wing on.

Far in the shallows lonely herons stand,
Like sentinels on guard upon their posts,
Croaking hoarse warning to the feathered hosts
Of coming peril to their peaceful land.

On the low bars the herring gull's harsh cries
Make protest while the burgomaster scolds
For some rare morsel which his subject holds
As treasure trove, and clamours for the prize.

Like flakes of foam tossed on a listless wind
White kittiwakes with gentle call flit by,
And whirling hordes of restless terns give cry,
Till with their screams the very skies are dinned.

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The turn-stone chuckles as he breaks his fast,
The strident curlew making answer shrill.
The yelping tattlers, watchful, never still,
Mock at the whistling plover speeding past.

All these and more join in the symphony,
Making the solitude more wild and lone,
While never ceasing, rolls in undertone
The diapason of the mighty sea.

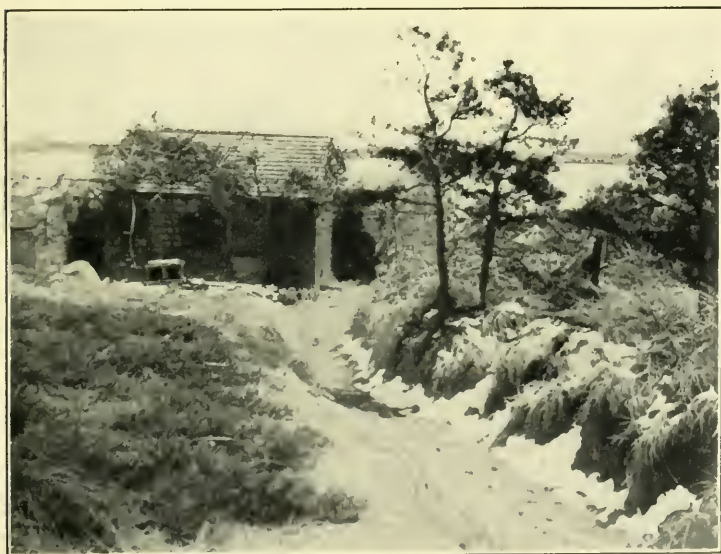


“ THE DIAPASON OF THE MIGHTY SEA.”

Wild Fowl Decoying

UCK and goose shooting over trained live decoys, the greater number of them free and untrammelled of all restraint, is a sport peculiar to Eastern Massachusetts, particularly in the ponds of Norfolk, Plymouth and Barnstable Counties. Barring one stand near Portland, and one on the shores of Quincy Bay by salt water, I know of no other places outside of this comparatively small district where wild fowl are taken in this way, but from Ponkapog, hardly a dozen miles from Boston, a skirmish line of shooting stands on the shores of the different ponds stretches across the path of the southerly migration of the birds as far east as Wellfleet far out on Cape Cod. The best opportunities usually come when the birds have been driven off their outside course by the heavy northeasterly storms of the fall and early winter, which send them inland, heavy winged and astray, in a state of

body and mind readily responsive to the siren voices of their kindred which float up to them from the quiet pond surrounded by the wind-tempering groves which they look down upon. This is without doubt the spot they have sought, and honking or quacking in grateful salutation, they set their tired wings and circle down. The sounds of welcome redouble in volume as they approach the surface of the pond, and in a moment, as if unable longer to await their coming, a flock of earlier arrivals in that haven of refuge swings out from the shadow of the woods like a committee of reception to greet them. The courtesy cannot be denied, and the new arrivals whirl to the meeting, uttering soft cries as their ranks almost join in their flight. On a sandy beach they see more of their fellows, splashing and preening themselves. Towards these, guided by their new friends, they make their way. It is a goodly company and the strangers follow, eager to be strangers no longer. As they near the beach their guides and sponsors set their wings and drop into the water with loud cries and much flapping, and they follow so good and grateful an example. How restful and buoyant the water after the stress and buffeting of the wind! Under it they plunge,



DUCK STANDS.

quenching their thirst of travel. Over it they disport themselves, rising half out of it for the joy of falling upon its soft surface again. Soon they notice that their new friends are swimming towards the sandy beach, and gathering together they paddle after them, calling resonantly. Nearer and nearer they swim, toled onward by those before them, and then — the story ends, and very frequently there is no one of the travellers left to tell it.

As the birds generally come into the pond from the eastward, the stand is placed in the woods on the easterly shore, if possible, so that the trees may serve as a screen from the birds while approaching overhead, and to obtain the various advantages of the smooth water off the sheltered shore. A sandy beach in front of the stand is most essential. All the varieties of birds which are shot in this way like to come ashore occasionally, and in addition to its natural attraction, the beach is used as the tethering place of the "callers." By feeding the "flyers" on the beach during their period of education, and always keeping it well strewn with corn, they soon learn to regard it as a good place to come back to after a flight. The little strip of sand is really hearth

and home to the decoys, and they care to wander from it much less frequently than one would believe when one considers that the "flyers," particularly the geese, are absolutely free to start for North Carolina with the next flock of south-bound birds the moment their coops are open for them.

Of the goose decoys, only the goslings of the year are used as "flyers," and doubtless the calls of the old birds tethered on the shore have much to do in keeping the youngsters to their allegiance to the beach bountiful, for it is not ventured to use them the second season, when the parental authority has ceased and the migratory instinct becomes stronger than mere appetite.

The duck "flyers" are usually kept with one or both wings slightly clipped, not enough to prevent all flight, but sufficiently to keep it from being stimulating to their imaginations, and those which are let at large seem quite satisfied to whirl about in the air a few times with much quacking, settle in the water and paddle ashore again to waddle about on the edge of the beach in spluttering contentment. Occasionally a duck flyer finds his feathers a little longer than his owner supposed they were, and off he goes, either alone or



SETTING OUT GOOSE DECOYS.



DUCK "FLYERS."

with the survivors of some flock at which he has been flown, but generally the call of the trough is strong enough to hold him with his fellows on the beach.

The geese are far more interesting than the ducks, and many of the older birds develop marked individualities of their own in addition to the habits common to all of them. There is much more variation in the individual marking and conformation too, particularly of head and bill, than one would believe at first impression, but the keeper of one stand on the Cape claimed to be able to pick out any one of the sixty-three geese he handled without looking at the punches in the webs of its feet, this being the way of marking the different families of goslings, and I have no doubt with entire truth, as my own unskilled eye could soon note identifying marks on the different birds in a coop of five. A full-grown Canada goose is a powerful bird, hard hitting with beak or wings when angry, and generally angry or near it, but many of these decoys become entirely docile with their handlers, and allow themselves to be carried to the tethering place on the beach without struggle or protest. Occasionally a bird will show actual enjoyment in its

human friend's society and conversation, and do its utmost to respond in kind. We were looking at the birds one morning at this same stand, and as we came by the coops much honking resounded from one of them farther down the line.

"Coming, coming, Molly, old girl," said the keeper. The sound stopped and in a moment we saw Molly, a splendid, beautifully marked goose, standing at her gate, thrusting her black head backwards and forwards with serpentine grace, and hissing softly and amiably with the highest Japanese politeness. I instinctively dropped a few pieces of corn into the coop, but Molly wanted no corn.

"Well, well, Molly, well, well," crooned the keeper to her as he stroked the glossy head through the bars, and it was very evident that that was what Molly wanted.

The goose "callers" are either wild birds which have been captured and domesticated, or birds more than a year old born in captivity from wild stock. The "flyers" are born in captivity of course, and the keeping up of the supply of goose "flyers," the most picturesque element in the whole sport to my mind, is the greatest difficulty connected with it. Apart from the raids of

rats and skunks upon the young birds, the reasons for this are two, — the apparent weakening of the “Life Force,” in Shavian terms, in the birds born in captivity, so that mating is the exception rather than the rule among them, possibly because the field of natural selection is limited to the few rather than to the many, and the fact that both goose and gander once mated are faithful in bereavement for ever after. This is doubtless highly creditable to the birds, though it has been suggested that this was the true reason of their being called geese, but it is equally inconvenient to their owners. The mother goose who has seen her duty and done it for the last five seasons becomes a widow, and the bag of geese at her owner’s stand that fall is little to boast of. A young unmated gander may be wing tipped and find his affinity in the group of hitherto unwooed maidens in the coops, but that is about the only chance of legitimate succession, and it may well be understood that the longevity of the goose is a matter of congratulation to the owners of a happy pair and that the best is none too good for them.

The stand at which my friend “Molly” spends her autumns may be taken as typical of them all

in general arrangement, though it excels most of those I have visited in comfort and convenience. It is situated on the easterly shore of one of the larger ponds on Cape Cod, tucked away in a thickly growing grove of scrub oak and pine which perfectly conceals the low roof of the camp when all the other trees are bare. On the left, as you approach on the private road leading from the highway is a refrigerator outhouse for the birds that may be killed, burrowed into the side of a little hill on top of which, and facing towards the pond, are the coops for the "flyer" geese, four sets of them at a recent visit. It is quite an advantage to have the flyers so situated on a height, as they are certain to take flight from it when liberated, instead of solemnly marching in single file to the water's edge, as has been known to happen with them in a critical moment when they have been loosed from coops on the level of the shore. To the sliding door of each coop a long rope is attached, each identified by a wooden tag at the end, all lying at hand on the bank behind the brush-covered palisade erected just above the high water mark on the sandy beach. A sloping passage covered with branches leads down from the door of the camp to the space

behind the ambush which is built about shoulder high, pierced with loopholes at intervals, and thickly thatched with cedar boughs. On the bank above, a thick planting of evergreens conceals the shoreward side of the little building beneath the trees. At one end of the palisaded water battery is a little shed in which the loaded guns and a supply of spare ammunition are kept. End to end along the blind are long wooden boxes. As you wonder what they may contain you may hear a muffled "quack" from one of them. Well you may, for they are full of ducks, ducks and still more ducks, sitting in these dreary cages until they shall be needed to attract some passing flock. Then off come the covers, and each man seizes duck after duck, throwing it high into the air. The birds quickly get their poise and whirl out over the water, quacking loudly. If they see the newcomers, as they generally do, they fly towards them as far as their clipped wings will carry them, and then "plop" comfortably into the pond in a manner frequently most enticing to the newcomers, which also alight to follow along their wake, back towards the corn-strewn beach.

The actual shooting is the poorest part of it all, as the first shot is taken sitting, with the guns

through the port-holes, at a given signal when the birds are bunched the closest, the man at the right taking the birds at his end, and so on across the flock. If any escape the initial bombardment the survivors are saluted over the top of the blind, making the second-barrel shot almost as difficult as the first was unrighteously simple. If the birds jump high and straight, as the black duck generally will, it is well enough, but a low flying bird has more than an even chance, as the height of the palisade makes over-shooting almost a certainty, except to the "old timers," and even they have their regrets occasionally.

These same "old timers" are only second to the "flyers" in adding interest to the sport. The hired keeper of the stand is always high up in the order. He has lived with the decoys year in and year out until he literally knows their language. He is at the stand day and night throughout the season, instead of merely the few days snatched from the office which come to most of us. Strange and interesting things are bound to happen to him in his watching, and his quaint relation of them helps mightily in the hours of waiting in the little camp, for sometimes the skies are unduly bright and the flocks few and far between. Molly's

friend related one instance of the unexpected that happened at his stand one morning. The "callers" on the beach were honking lustily, and the keeper and his companion hurried down the covered way into the blind to see a goodly "gaggle" of gray geese lowering down into the pond. A pull at one of the long ropes let loose a set of flyers to which the strangers turned. A second set swung out, bringing the two other flocks nearer still. The chorus on the beach redoubled its efforts, and after a few gliding circles all the birds dropped into the water. On they came until the decoys were almost at the beach, and the wild fowl so nearly within shot that guns were cocked and final arrangements made to greet the twenty-eight splendid fowl swimming in close phalanx towards the shore. The next moment the air was full of geese as they scattered in all directions, while a great bald eagle swooped down upon them with outstretched talons from behind the trees that had screened his coming. The flyers came ashore pell-mell, while a shot from the blind warned the great bird to keep his distance. Such a sight would have been worth seeing and a deal of recompense for the loss of such a shot.

At another stand the " callers " announced some new arrivals in the pond late one dark November night, and the three men who happened to be in the camp jumped from their warm bunks, seized their guns and hurried out into the night, clad in whatever garments came first to hand. It was inky black, but out in the darkness they could hear the beating of swift wings and then a succession of heavy splashes close inshore. The decoys on the beach were calling continuously, and the answering calls came from but a few yards beyond them. It was impossible to see a thing, but the men waited, shivering, hoping that the strange birds would range off to one side, with the possibility of a chance shot at the sound in the darkness. Nothing of the kind occurred, as strangers and decoys had apparently foregathered permanently, and back to bed they went, within a hundred feet of their unseen prey. Geese and men slept side by side, but the gunners were up again before daybreak, peering through the port-holes to see what they could see. There on the beach were the geese, tame and wild, where they had been all night, some standing on one leg, heads under wings, some breasted in the sand with heads thrown back, while two or three



THE CALLERS.



AFTER A SUCCESSFUL SHOT.

did sentinel duty at the water's edge. As the day dawned they roused themselves, with low calls and honkings. Gradually the wild birds gathered together, apparently regarding their tethered bed-fellows with some suspicion, and into the water they glided. As they pressed together from the shore with heads held high, the long delayed shots resounded, and as one bird the flock slept again.

As a general thing the stands are not kept in commission in the spring, but on one occasion two "city fellers" were staying with an old market gunner at his stand in early April during the northern flight. When they arrived there they found conditions most unfavourable. The weather was fair and warm, but not warm enough to have entirely melted the ice from the pond, a belt of it still stretching out over a gunshot from the shore directly in front of the blind. It seemed hopeless enough, but they were there and a favourable wind might blow up for the better, and a few days in old clothes near a gun are good for the spring fever in any year. A flock of ducks came into the pond in the evening, but the quacking flyers bumping down upon the ice were no attraction to them, and they dropped into the

open water, swimming along the edge of the ice belt, giving a sample of what might be expected. The next day was bright and beautiful, but not a good day for ducks, much less for geese. But all signs fail at times. About the middle of the morning one of the visitors happened to look up, by a happy chance, and saw a V of thirteen geese going north high over head. They were flying in silence, and neither the "callers" on the beach nor the birds in the coops had noticed them. They too had been calling little during the morning, and were quite silent when the wild birds came along.

"Wal', that's too bad. They don't hear us," drawled the old chap, as he watched the steady flight of the birds. "But they wouldn't 'a' come over the ice anyway," he philosophized.

"They'll hear us all right," answered one of his visitors.

He ran back from the blind to the little hill where the "flyer" coops were stationed, and in a moment honking loud and long filled the air, interspersed with insistent demands to "holler, confound you, holler." The callers on the beach took up the cry until the wooded banks of the pond reëchoed. Presently the birds in the air

changed their formation a little, slowing their flight and closing up the convergent ranks. An answering call came down the wind and in a moment the flock turned and headed back towards the pond. On came the birds, honking vigorously to the callers at the stand. Soon they were over the pond, well down, even circling over the belt of glistening ice, which ought to have melted then and there at the things which were said of it. Then with many strange gyrations down they dropped into the open water. As the birds lit the geese on the shore stopped calling and the new birds were soon busy with their ablutions or at play, skittering along the surface like half-fledged flappers. The men in the stand watched them awhile in silence. The decoys on the beach and those in the coops were silent too.

"I guess it's all over, even the shoutin'," said the veteran.

"Not yet," said his still hopeful guest. Leaving his gun at his port hole he went back to the coops a second time, and again loud honking echoed from the wooded hillock to be taken up by the tethered birds. At the sounds the swimming birds gathered together and in a moment were on the wing flying straight across the ice towards the

stand. The recent disturber of the peace was back again, gun in hand, in time to see the birds settle gently upon the ice.

"We've got to do this quick," he said. "Ready."

The shots rang out, and but three birds of the thirteen rose from the ice, one of them only to fall again in the open water beyond its edge.

The veteran looked over the top of the blind at the fallen birds.

"I've gunned this pond for forty year," said he, in a half-dazed way, "and I never see geese fly over the ice before."

That was the burden of his song during the rest of the stay there, in any period of silence, at any hour of the day. If he said it once, he said it a hundred times, and I have no doubt the memory is a solace to his leisure moments even to this day.

It was an unusual occurrence, for wild fowl do generally avoid flying over a floe or belt of ice, and though I have seen birds crawl up from the water on to it, I have never known them to pitch upon ice from flight except on this occasion.

The actual amount of shooting done during the season at any one of the stands is not to be com-

pared with the possibilities of the western and southern grounds, and the modest total of the best of them would look small on the records of one of the Currituck clubs. Neither does the potting of the swimming fowl give one the feeling of elation and satisfaction that comes with the stopping of a hard-flying, crossing pair, crumpled up in full flight, and the sound of their " splash, splash " as they strike the water, but the part played by the flying decoys lends a living, dramatic interest to every chance which does come at the stands that prevents the possibility of monotony or surfeit in the sport. Any one who has ever tossed a " flyer " is certain to have memories of incidents doubtless more unusual and interesting than those I have sketched here, and my own experience has been that few things connected with sport remain in my mind's eye more vividly than certain tableaux of flocks of loudly calling birds circling over the calm surface of a wooded pond, now joining their ranks together, now whirling apart again in swift evolutions, then setting their wings and alighting.

My first stay at a stand offered certain typical experiences. A friend was making his headquarters during the season at his stand on a pond

near Boston, coming into the city in the morning with the other suburbanites, — unless there were birds in the pond, — and returning to the simple life in time for what the late afternoon might bring forth. One day in November I went out with him. As we came down through the woods from the main road we soon heard the geese calling on the beach, their honking sounding above the monotone of the never-ceasing quacking of the ducks. The interest began at once, for there might be birds swimming in to the decoys even then. There was no such luck as that awaiting us however, when we went out through the neat, comfortable little house into the blind, and the keeper reported that no birds had come into the pond during the day. This was not unexpected, as the weather was unseasonably warm and fair, with hardly enough breeze to ripple the surface of the water as it reflected the rays of the afternoon sun lowering over the western hills across the pond. The tall chimney of a power house in the near-by village where we had left the train sent its thin column of smoke straight up into the air, lending a dissonant tone to the otherwise unmarred picturesqueness of the place. It was so calm that we could plainly hear the calling of

the decoys at the other stand over on the northerly shore of the pond. An occasional whistle of a passing locomotive came to us from the direction of the village, while the lowing of cattle and the occasional barking of a dog told of farms near by beyond the trees. The conditions were about as unpromising for a flight of wild fowl as could be imagined, but hope springs eternal and we were on the watch again after our early supper. The sun had set by this time and the shadows across the pond were encroaching more and more upon the coppery surface when a flock of black ducks swooped down over the trees far to the left of us. Some of the decoys soon saw them and quacked loudly. The birds at the other stand across the pond saw them too and lifted up their voices. The neighbouring stand was directly on the line of flight of the wild birds, and though they swung in towards us at the calls of our decoys, they still kept their course. The moment we sighted them the keeper had the cover off one of the long duck boxes and a flapping mallard in his grasp. Up he went into the air, out over the beach followed by duck after duck as we got our hands in. The air was full of whirling ducks and the water boiled with their splashing. The geese on

the beach and in the coops joined in the chorus, though it was no affair of theirs, and as a gratifying result of our little pandemonium the wild birds turned suddenly and circled directly towards us. It seemed wisest to let well enough alone. We stopped work with the flyers, for there were birds enough in the water to bring the visitors down with them if so the fates decreed. On came the flying fowl, greeted by excited cries of the swimmers beneath them. They swept past the decoys, then turned again and came skimming back, stiff winged, showing every evidence of having arrived at a final decision to alight then and there. It seemed so much a fact accomplished that we parcelled out the flock among us for the expected shot, while our feathered fellow-conspirators ceased their quacking and awaited the newcomers with heads erect. But ducks like chickens, should not be counted before the appointed time. At this tense expectant moment a loud burst of frantic quacking came from the decoys across the pond, and in an instant the wild birds whirled into the air and turned in the direction from which the sounds had come. Again we filled the air with a volley of flyers, and again our ducks and geese lifted their voices seductively

and reproachfully, but it was all in vain, and "our" nine black ducks disappeared into the black shadows across the pond. The calling at the other stand continued for a few moments and then stopped, just as our birds had ceased their cries when the flock had come in to them. Then we saw four quick flashes from the shore across and knew that our marketing rivals had wiped our eyes. The echoes of the shots had hardly died away when there was a whistling of wings and out of the darkness came a single black duck, the sole survivor of the flock, so suddenly that our decoys gave short warning of its coming. Down it splashed, as if to sanctuary, within easy shot in the light streak of water which the shadows still left us, and the next moment had joined its fellows, fighting to the happy hunting grounds.

That was all that night, and after driving in the flyers we turned in, the vigilant geese honking an "all's well" from time to time as we dropped off to sleep.

It was a gray morning, quite calm, with the light wind shifted a little to the eastward, showing a storm coming but not yet arrived. The only game in sight was a solitary widgeon which we spied swimming about on the pond at our first

view, which duly came to bag after our early breakfast. As the morning hours passed our hopes departed with them, as no birds came over, and it was finally decided that it was a good opportunity to let out the goose flyers for a little exercise, as they had been flown but little in the past few days. The three coops were opened one after the other and the big gray birds marched forth in single file, honking loudly, taking wing at the water's edge. Each flock flew out over the pond, flying low in wide circles, and finally dropped in a little cove about one hundred yards away where they bathed and disported themselves, enjoying their temporary freedom to the utmost. It was a beautiful picture that they made there, but we were shown an even finer one a little later, when the whole flock rose in the air and flew by within ten yards of us, to light again no great distance below the stand. Things were in this condition when the old gander on the beach lifted up his voice in raucous hailing. We looked up instinctively and there high above us were eight wild geese flying to the south. The other geese took up the cry and called wildly, the ducks, excited and full of good intentions, chiming in with futile quacking. The decoys at the other


stand joined in until the noise might well have reached the heavens. It certainly reached the geese flying not far below them, for they turned and lowered towards the pond. Down, down they came, and there we stood with not a flyer in the coops to send forth to guide them to us. Our rivals of the night before were not caught napping. At what seemed the exact psychological moment, as the wild birds were on the point of lighting, out from the shore came the vanguard of their flyers with joyous cries. The new birds lifted again to meet them and their ranks intermingled as they whirled shorewards. It was wonderful to see. Then came the second set of flyers from the shore. The first flown birds responded the more quickly to their calls, and the joined forces separated again into wild and tame, and lit after a few whirling evolutions. It was so calm that we could see the birds swim towards the shore in two flocks, the tame birds in the lead. Just as two or three of the decoys rose up onto the beach we saw two puffs of smoke quickly followed by two more, while three geese out of the eight rose from the water in rapid flight. They lit again farther down the pond, but only stayed there a short time. One of them rose, the other two quickly joining it, and

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in a few moments the trio, flying in a little V, were far on their southward course again. In a minute more they would be out of sight, when of a sudden they turned and headed back again. Over the pond they came, high in the air to be sure, but coming, and directly towards us, as we crouched close behind the palisade. They paid no attention at all to the decoys at the other stand, though they were calling loudly, but passed those Pharisees by on the other side. Fortunately our flyers had all come in and gathered on the beach, and these had attracted their attention. They called lustily and the birds overhead answered them as they went over the stand directly above our heads, while we lay flat on the ground each with one eye squinting towards the heavens. In a few moments they were back again and out over the pond where they lowered, lowered, lowered and finally lit, welcomed by our birds on the beach. After a short survey they started swimming inshore, and as the word was given there was a goose for each of us stretched on the water. It was sheer good luck rather than good management from beginning to end, for it was no skill or effort of ours which caused the geese to turn back to us, but it was none the less welcome. To be sure the other

stand had beaten us again, but as I look back at the picture of our rivals' flyers going out to meet the wild birds, I find it very easy to forgive them for stealing the morning's cream that day.

Two Bears

HE sound of the word "bear" at once suggests to the lay mind great size, shagginess and ferocity, and those fatal embraces with which it is generally understood the creature invariably overwhelms its enemies. Doubtless a great deal of this is due to the fact that the bear is one of the first animals of one's acquaintance in early childhood, almost invariably in connection with some most tragic occurrence. The literature and legends of childhood are full of bears, a benevolent bear appearing only now and then as a great exception to the established rule that bears are the special enemies of bad little boys and girls, always on the watch to catch them and eat them up in punishment for their misdeeds.

The fearsome glamour which surrounds the bear in most minds is by no means unnatural in view of such training, and even after a closer

acquaintance with him it still persists, at least to the extent of making the pursuit and capture of a bear a most desirable and gratifying performance. Be it understood that there are bears and bears. The white Polar bear of the Arctic seas, the huge Kadiak on his island in the Pacific, his massive brown relative of the Alaska mountains, the grisly denizens of the Rockies, — they are all honourable bears, and from the tales that one hears of them from the mighty hunters of those lands, they succeed well in fulfilling the most exacting demands of what a bear should be.

Now that the panther and the wolf have been so nearly exterminated in the eastern hunting grounds, the only large carnivorous animal that is left is the black bear. Neither in size nor in warlike spirit is he the equal of the other varieties of his kind, though it would appear from more recent narratives that the difference between them is growing less in this respect, as man has brought the nameless fear that comes with his encroachment deeper and deeper into their strongholds. A full-grown black bear in proper pelage makes a splendid trophy of a well-conducted stalk or some exceptionally lucky chance

shot, and in the eastern country, where dogs are rarely if ever used in the pursuit, it is only in one or the other of these ways that such a trophy is honourably obtained, by which I mean with the rifle, not the trap. The lucky chances come to but few, for there is no creature in the woods with senses more alert, scent, sight and hearing, and it is rare that one of these does not warn him of your approach before your paths can cross. At some rare moment a bear may be taken at his disadvantage and a shot obtained, as was the experience of a friend who came upon three bears swimming across the river he was ascending in a canoe. He waited until each gained the shore and dropped them one after the other. Another occurrence which was related to me was of a hunter returning with his guide to their camp to find three bears busily engaged in pillaging the provision tent. The guide was in the lead and first discovered the animals, one with his black fur whitened with the meal and flour from the tattered sacks, so busily engaged in their work of destruction that they paid absolutely no attention to his shout with which he instinctively first thought to drive them away. The hunter killed two of the marauders, the third one escaping

into the woods. In my own experience I had seen bear signs fresh and frequent on almost every hunting trip I had taken before the one on which my own first chance occurred, on a barren bog in Newfoundland, but at no time had the conditions been sufficiently favourable to allow the signs to be followed up and the shot obtained, however fresh the markings of the broad paws in the soft ground or however near the breaking of the underbrush.

On the morning of the 15th of September in 1901 we left camp to go over across the valley and pick up certain caribou skins which we had left drying on a convenient rocky ledge. We found them in good condition and sent the cook back to camp with them, keeping Stroud and one of the other guides with us. The carcass of one of the caribou had been left near at hand and we hunted it up to see if by any chance a bear had come to it. The whole thing was gone. A well-marked trail in the grass led us to some bare ground on an outcrop of ledge where we lost it, but a puff of wind laden with a most terrific odour soon set us right, and we found what was left of the caribou in some bushes at the edge of the bog. All the signs showed that a good able-bodied bear had

brought it there within the last twenty-four hours, as the tracks had been made since a rain-storm which had stopped about that time before. Apparently he had not yet begun to feed on it, which meant that he would be back. We decided that we would be back too, and after a run up the valley took up our watch on a neighbouring bush-grown ledge about a quarter of a mile away. It was then about four in the afternoon. The sun was getting low and it had turned quite cold. The excitement was rather high, the more as it had to be suppressed, and as the shadows grew deeper we began to see bears everywhere. Stroud would seize my arm and point, and his bear would turn into a boulder before my eyes. I would grab his arm, and my bear would become a log which he had been examining some time before. My friend Talbot, who was sitting by me, had similar experiences. It finally occurred to us to find out whose bear it was to be if he appeared. It was our custom to take alternate shots when hunting together, but this arrangement only applied to caribou, and did not include bears. Stroud tossed the one coin among us all, and its fall determined that the bear was mine if I could get him.

Phantom bears still kept appearing as the constantly changing shadows grew darker, but we pointed them out to each other less assertively than at first. It grew colder and colder. Stroud produced a bottle of something they call rum in Newfoundland, and my companions basked in its glow at intervals. I knew it was no medicine for the eye and hand of a prospective bear shooter, and I shivered in solitary abstinence. It had become so dark that it would soon be impossible to see to shoot at all, and my friend, who had nothing to gain by waiting, suggested that we should give it up. I kept my eyes on the edge of the woods and agreed to go in fifteen minutes by Stroud's watch. I had hardly spoken when a black thing sticking up in the brush at the edge of the bog seemed to move, but the phantom bears had seemed to move too and I said nothing about it. The next instant it did move unquestionably. A moment more and the creature was on the bog clear of the brush where he had been peering about to see if the coast was clear. He started across the bog headed for the caribou carcass with a quick shuffling gait, and loomed up in the dim light as big as a polo pony. Stroud had already taken his boots off as I turned to him.

“Take off your moccasins,” he said. “When he begins to feed we’ll start for him.”

I was soon in my stocking feet, and we were watching, ready for the right moment, when suddenly the bear turned and started back as swiftly and silently as he had come. This was a bitter one for us and our plan of campaign was knocked in the head. The brush out of which the bear had come was at the upper edge of a wooded island just above the outcrop where we were concealed. There was a lead back of it, and as the bear kept on his course it was clear that our only chance was to get to the upper end of the adjoining island by the back lead and try to head him off. As soon as the bear disappeared around the corner of the brush we started. Subsequent developments proved that the rocks were sharp and that the bog was very wet to our unshod feet, but we did not know about those things then. We were after that bear. Stroud was ahead moving swiftly and silently. As I went along at his elbow I threw my rifle up a few times until I found I could catch the ivory bead fairly, dark as it was. We found a noisy little brook coming down the lead which would make it difficult to hear any movement in the brush,

so it was necessary to be doubly on the alert. Suddenly a black shape rose above the brush across the brook, close to a bank covered with thick bushes. It was the bear, and Stroud had passed him. Thanks to my experiments I caught the white sight quickly on the creature's shoulder and fired. Down he went on all fours, and the next instant, before I could get in a second shot, had scrambled up the bank into the brush. I could see the movement of the foliage and sent two more bullets into it, though the bear had disappeared. We crossed over the brook, loaded up again, and stood listening close to the bank where the bear had climbed up. Stroud was sure the first shot was a hit. For a few minutes we heard nothing, then a half-smothered, groaning bellow sounded in the depths of the thicket. Then it was all quiet again.

"He's dead," said Stroud, but he did not start into the thicket to pull him out.

"Mebbe," said I, and I didn't either.

The silence still continued, which might mean either that the bear really was dead or that he had stolen away, and I was by no means reconciled to remaining in ignorance until the morning.

"We will go in a little way," I said, and we

climbed the bank where the bear had scaled it. The brush was waist high and I think we both felt easier when we found a big log a few yards ahead, on which we mounted for an observation. We could see our own feet at least, which was comforting.

“The last brush I saw move was down by that birch,” said Stroud, pointing to a tree about thirty yards away.

If that was so it was obvious that the bear, quick or dead, could not be this side of it, so I came down from the log to work around to some better point of observation nearer the place he indicated. I had gone about a dozen paces through the brush when a low stiff spruce blocked my stride. I pushed through it and brought my unshod foot down full weight on something soft that rolled from under it. Needless to say I removed my foot and backed off that dozen paces through the brush considerably quicker than I had advanced them. I stood waiting with rifle at the ready, but nothing stirred. Stroud came down from the log and joined me, and we went back again. There was the bear quite dead, flat on his back with his paws outstretched. I had stepped on one of them.

To say that we were pleased puts it mildly. The creature was a large fat male, going well to four hundred pounds according to the men's estimate, for of course we had no means of weighing him. We signalled for Talbot and George, who soon came stumbling through the brush nearly as pleased as we were. We dragged the bear out of the thicket, did what we could towards dressing it, and then the three miles across the bog by starlight. We fell into holes and brooks in the darkness, and even when "Uncle John" finally took us through about half a mile of thick black spruce with an eight foot precipice concealed in the middle of it, — we all found it, one after the other, — and then waded us across the brook a quarter of a mile below our camp, we forgave him even these things.

The next morning all hands went over to examine and subsequently skin the bear and pack in the meat which the men intended to salt down in sundry big barrels they had brought along with them in the dories. A good many things seemed more clear by daylight, and among them that it was a remarkable piece of luck that we should have even seen the bear at all. He had not waited for darkness to come before going

after his caribou meat, but had come out in the mid-day while we were away, and had carried the whole thing over to the place where I first fired at him. In all probability he had picked it up in his fore paws and walked off with it, and the sight of the great creature out on the open bog would have been worth going miles to see. Why he should have come out again and gone over to the place from which he had removed his booty I have never been able to figure out. We picked up my three shells and found that he was about fifty yards away when the first bullet hit him, and that this one and one of those fired into the brush had done the work. Either one would have been enough. He had a good skin for so early in the fall, and was altogether a most satisfactory bear for a first attempt, barring the fact that he smelled abominably from the interrupted feast that he had carried around with him.

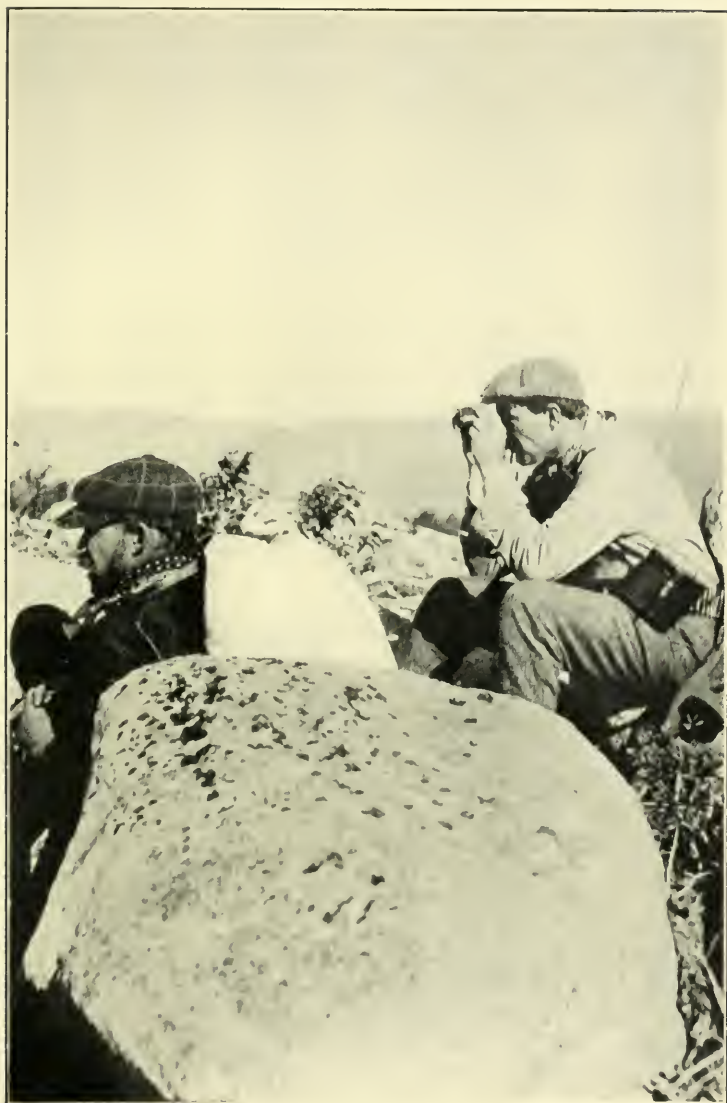
It was five years before my lucky star and Ursa Major were again in conjunction, this time in northern New Brunswick. On various occasions William Bateman had waved his hand in an expansive manner towards the hills to the westward of our camp and declared that they were an excellent bear country, at least that they



WILLIAM BATEMAN CROSSING "44."

had been ten years before, when he and a certain Mr. Simpson had killed a "fatherly one" in that district, the memory of which was still green in the good William's mind. Relying on the hopes of the posterity of a bear with such characteristics as William's adjective suggested, we started early one cold September morning for the hills. It was barely daylight as we ate our breakfast, for we were to do in one day what was generally regarded as a two days' trip, and an early start was necessary if we were to hope to get back to camp by dark. The canoe was stiff and hard with the frost, and as the men poled up the stream through the mist still rising from the surface of the river, the drippings from their poles froze where they fell. At that hour in the morning there was a good chance of a shot on the banks of the river, and for awhile I held my rifle in my hands until the metal grew too chilled for comfort, for I had carelessly forgotten my mittens that morning, the first time they had been needed. About two miles up the river we landed at an old camp ground used in the spring by the driving crews, adjacent to the portage road which parallels the river at greater or less distance from its bank, extending on into

the wilderness to the farthest lumber camp. From there we followed the road, hard and whitened with the night's frost, for about two miles more till we could see the top of the nearest of the range of hills for which we were aiming frowning down through an opening among the tops of the trees. The sun was up by this time, and taking a line for the bare gray granite we turned off to the right through the heavy timber. At first it was thick spruce and cedar with low branches so closely set as to be almost impassable, and the coldness of the morning was soon forgotten as we struggled through it. As the ascent began there was more hard wood and the trees grew less thickly, making progress much easier. Soon we came upon a little brook trickling down from the hillside which we crossed, walking up the farther slope of its valley toward the summit. Higher still the ground became more open and the growth of the trees much smaller. Numerous signs of caribou appeared, keeping us on a constant lookout. Soon there was but a thin fringe of bushes between us and the bare hilltop, and as we came to the farther edge of it we stopped to reconnoitre the country which the last steep ascent had opened up before us. Down in the



SPYING THE HILLS.

direction from which we had come we could see the line of the river as it flowed through the green forest, with here and there a flash of its waters at some bend or bogan. Directly across from us, winding down from another range of hills, was the line of the South Branch, joining with that of the "big river" almost opposite the mouth of Portage Brook which flowed down through its narrow valley at our feet. At the end of the valley a tinge of vivid blue showed where Lake Upsalquitch lay almost hidden among the hills. The joining of the streams made a great cross in the green wilderness extending there before us. The opposite side of the valley which we had ascended was a bare hillside about half a mile away from where we were sitting. I was engaged in looking over a promising bit of country somewhat farther afield through my glasses when Sam touched my arm.

"There's one," he said, and following the direction in which he pointed I saw a good-sized black bear busily engaged with some blueberry patches on the hillside across the valley about half-way up the slope. The only way to get him was to go for him, and leaving our sweaters and field glasses with William we started pell-mell down

the hill. It was inevitable that we should lose sight of the bear as we entered the woods at the bottom of the valley, but we had observed that the general direction which he was taking was up the slope and to the right, and the only chance seemed to be to climb the hill and strike his line if possible. The rush down the hill and the scramble through the trees had so thoroughly winded both of us that we rested a few minutes before starting up on the farther side of the valley. I doubt if I could have hit the hill, much less the bear, in the condition to which our race had brought me. After getting our breath again we started on, I in the lead, following the line of some stumps and bushes which we had taken as landmarks, but there was no sign of the bear anywhere. We had no reason to believe that he had seen or heard us, for we had been concealed among the trees during the greater part of the distance which we had covered and the wind was favourable for our approach from that direction.

As we kept on we saw a large patch of undergrowth ahead of us on the line we were following, and it seemed probable that the bear had been heading for that when we had first observed him,

and that he had now gained it, as he was nowhere in sight in the open. There seemed to be nothing to do but admit defeat and sweeten the taste of it with the delicious blueberries which grew everywhere about us. We feasted for awhile on the great blue clusters and then turned back towards the hill from which we had come. We located William sitting where we had left him on the side of the hill, when I happened to notice a black spot on the flat summit above him. It moved in a moment, and another bear came out from behind a patch of bushes which had concealed all but one end of him. The wind was blowing from us, but by swinging to the left, well up on the side of the high ridge from which the two lower hills extended, — which took us around the end of the wooded valley we had just crossed, — we avoided all danger of being winded and were able to keep our game in sight every moment during the stalk, a most desirable thing in still hunting. Sometimes it is impossible to do so, as when a suitable approach must be gained by a long *détour* over hilly ground, but the game that is once lost to sight for any length of time is seldom more than a memory dear, particularly in a wooded country. Sit down and wait and see

what will happen, and be sure that as the present approaches the impossible, the situation is almost bound to change for the better. The point is to know when it changes and be able to grasp the new opportunity the moment it occurs. Your intended victim is not picketed in the spot where you have sighted him, and as you start away in one direction bent upon his circumvention, no logic of yours will prevent him from changing all his plans the moment the ledge or thicket is between you, and wandering off in quite the opposite one.

This time the fates were more kind. This bear was also eating blueberries and moved slowly from bush to bush on the flat top of the hill, occasionally sitting down on his haunches like a dog, viewing the wonderful scenery perhaps, before returning to the blueberries. We finally worked well down to leeward of the bear and started directly for him, keeping the small spruces and old fire-scarred stumps, which fortunately were quite frequent, in our line of approach. At about one hundred yards' distance we were still not discovered, but a nearer shot was desirable if it could be had, as the blueberry bushes were rather high where he was feeding, so Sam stepped

behind a stump while I crawled on alone. I stopped behind another stump about sixty yards away from the bear and took breathing space. It was near enough, and as the animal raised his head I fired. It looked like a most egregious miss. The bear gathered his hind quarters under him with a great leap and was going at full tilt across the open faster than I had ever supposed a bear could go, looking more like a rolling ball of wavy black fur than a creature with four legs. I led him a foot or two, fired again, and saw the moss fly from the ground on my side of him in a line with his shoulder. My hopes were at the vanishing point, as was the bear almost, as he had nearly reached the drop from the summit of the hill, but before the rifle was re-loaded for a third shot the furry ball stopped short, collapsed and was still. Sam came up on the run and a few moments later William appeared over the brow of the hill reporting whizzing sounds over his head immediately before. The bear was a fine one, of good size, with unusually fine fur for so early in the season, and the guides were soon at work taking off the skin. It developed that both shots had taken effect, the first one straight through the shoulder, but a little high for quick

results, and the second apparently on the ricochet, entering just below the first and ranging further forward. As we worked at the skin William told us how the bear we had first approached had wandered along in the direction in which he was first headed and then had turned to the left without apparent cause or purpose and had disappeared around the fall of the hill. This had happened before we had come out of the woods at the bottom of the valley. He had tried to signal to us when we emerged, but we had failed to notice his signal and had consequently kept along in exactly the wrong direction until we had given up the chase.

While the men were busy I looked over the bare hillsides from time to time with the field glasses in the hope of seeing a wandering caribou. After a number of fruitless observations I picked up a black spot on the far side of the first hill which did not seem to have been there before. It was the first bear again, apparently coming up from further down the hill, and we started for him on the run, back around the end of the little valley. The wind was right for a good approach, but when we arrived where he ought to have been, the animal had vanished a second time, and no

search from the commanding point we gained showed hide or hair of him.

It was now well past the usual time to "bile" and we started back again for William and our various belongings. The work was done on the bear when we arrived, and after fruitless efforts to make a decent pack of the slippery, gliding skin with our belts and a piece of twine, we crammed it into Sam's sweater and started for the height of the ridge, with the idea of following it along to the westward and looking over what country might be opened up on the other side. The blueberries through which we tramped in the next half-mile would have fed whole families. On the rocky wind-swept summit we got out the glasses and almost at the same moment we all discovered a black spot on the nearest hill beyond. It was a small spot, for it was a small bear that made it this time. We watched him a few moments to get his line of travel, and then started for him along the slope of the ridge, intending to circle the end of the valley that separated us and come upon him from above. I insisted that we must keep our game in sight every moment, and so we tried to do, but it proved impossible. A patch of stunted birch

and maple spread over a part of the hillside, a narrow strip of it, not more than fifty yards wide, extending far down the slope. We located our bear before we entered this and left him sitting on his haunches taking breath from his gorging on the blueberries. As we approached the farther side of the strip of woods, I dropped behind a little, getting my glasses from the case, and was thirty feet or so in the rear of the other two, when they stopped short, Sam beckoning and pointing towards some game in sight. For some reason I was certain that we had come upon a caribou feeding out beyond the edge of the woods, and crept forward as quickly and noiselessly as I could in the thicket we were in, looking through the branches for a glimpse of it.

"Lower," whispered Sam, pointing low down through the brush. About thirty yards down the hill was a patch of black about a foot square in among the green. It was moving slowly to the left where the thicket was the closest and in a moment would be gone. I fired and ran after the shot. The black spot had disappeared, and only the sound of breaking brush to the left of me told in which direction the creature had gone. It all happened in a second, and I was not much

surprised to find there was no blood on the slight trail the bear had left. I had fired too quickly, and as is often the case in shooting down-hill, had doubtless overshot, only an inch or so perhaps, but enough to miss the chance of bagging two separate bears, travelling alone, on the same day. In all probability the bear was the one we had first seen. He had probably kept on farther around the hill than we could see after our second trip after him, and was now making his way back to the blueberry patches. When Sam had first seen him he was coming up the hill directly towards us in full sight. In the few moments it had taken me to come up and get my thoughts from caribou to bears the animal had turned and had so nearly disappeared that in another instant I would not have seen him at all. It seemed incredible that we should have approached so near him making the noise we did through the thicket, but he apparently had no thought of danger until the shot was fired, all of which goes to prove that even the bear sometimes nods, and that eternal vigilance is the price of success in bear hunting even as it is of liberty.

As a corollary to this misfortune, when we looked for the little bear he too had vanished,

doubtless frightened by the shot. However, it had been a successful day as it was, and taking a course for the portage road, as we could see the line of it slashed through the forest across the valley, we started on the descent. The hill was steep and the rocks on its slope were sharp and insecure, and we were glad enough to reach the timber line, where the slope was more gentle, with moss and loam for footing instead of jagged granite. Just beyond the edge of the trees we came upon a spring, where we stopped for our belated lunch. The ground was trampled like a barn-yard all around it, moose and caribou tracks everywhere. Two bear wallows showed recent visitation, and there was hardly a tree that did not have hairs clinging to its bark and marks of horns upon it. William had a slogan of his own, as the signal for taking the trail again, the only variation depending upon whether it was ascending or descending:


“ Now, Bill down the hill
For another moose to kill,”

and after our pipes we were off again. At the bottom of the valley we ran across some beaver works, which necessitated a wade across the back-

water they had made nearly to our waists, but most of the going was through princess pine and we soon made the road. Two moose had travelled over it since we had left it in the morning, a cow and her well-grown calf, according to the tracks. It was after sunset when we reached the canoe, and its ribbed wooden bottom felt like a cushioned ottoman as I stretched out my stiffening legs upon it. It was down stream, so Sam and William took it easy too, and soon the glow of the camp-fire appeared around the bend of the river.

The lady of the camp welcomed us at the landing and was duly appreciative of the "partridges" which William told her were in Sam's sweater. When the great black head and the glossy fur rolled out at her feet and she finally absorbed the fact that the much desired rug was a reality, her expressions of satisfaction were such that I shall not venture to describe them.

The Opening of the Season

T was the opening day of the season in New Brunswick in 1906. Two days before a tremendous wind storm had blown down nearly all the trees that had surrounded the camp-ground which we had first selected as our base of operations, and we had moved up the river a half day's journey in the canoes to another hunting country, the centre of which was a small lake about a mile in from the river on the opposite side from that on which we had pitched our tents in a poplar grove. The tall white trunks made a much more cheerful environment than the black surfaces of the firs and spruces with which we had become familiar, and the outlying ones furnished an inexhaustible supply of excellent fire-wood, a most important item in one's domestic economy in the woods. I say economy, but wastefulness would be a more suitable term for the woodsman's absolute wanton-



BLUE LEDGE LAKE.



ON THE TRAIL.

ness in the use of wood. It was the first year I had taken my wife with me into the woods, for the very good reason that it was the first year that I had had a wife to take, and on one occasion, throwing convention aside, she expressed a desire for a piece of spruce gum. One of the guides wandered off a few rods and the next thing down came a big spruce tree for the sake of a particularly fine globule just above the reach of his axe. The cook would pile on great sticks of birch or poplar to heat the water with which to wash his dishes, and at night a quarter of a cord would go on the fireplace as soon as the kettles were off the pole.

We would need a canoe at the lake, so after our mid-day dinner we started off, all hands, to tote the lightest of our flotilla into it, where Sam was to remain with Mrs. Ware and myself for the evening calling. On that very day seven years before I had been with Sam at the little pond where the big black moose had come to us, and in optimistic bravado I had been assuring him and my wife that history was bound to repeat itself that night. Sam had preserved a discreet silence until that very morning, when he announced that he had dreamed of horns during the

night, which was a sure sign of moose to come. I think my wife still remained open to conviction even with this new evidence before her, but her courage was good, and she hit the trail, what there was of it, ready for what might befall us, good luck or bad. The way to the lake was not the smoothest, but we made good time and soon had the canoe in the water, after first making sure that nothing was in sight on the shores. William and Fred started back to the home camp, while Sam paddled us over to a small island about sixty yards out from our side of the lake, which was to be our calling place. On one side of the island was a beaver house, the largest one I have ever seen, certainly eighteen feet in diameter at the water's edge, and rising five feet or more above it. We landed on this, resting the prow of the canoe on a convenient log which the beavers had provided as a landing-place clear of the rustling bushes. It was still too early to begin to call, so we made ourselves as comfortable as we could on the interwoven sticks and communed in whispers about the things we could see and hear, while Sam prowled over the little island looking for the best place from which to call. It was almost perfectly still when we arrived there



BEAVER HOUSE AT BLUE LEDGE LAKE.



DOUBLE BEAVER DAM, SHOWING LOWER ABUTMENT FOR PROTECTION
AGAINST ICE.

and what little wind there had been died away as the sun went down. A white-throated sparrow perched on the topmost twig of a spruce on the shore was piping his shrill song — a tiny thing to break so profound a silence. The surface of the lake was like a mirror except where now and then the break of a rising trout disturbed the reflection of the trees around its shores. I happened to notice three slight wakes on the surface of the water, apparently coming nearer, and in a few moments three grebes, the makers of the gentle disturbance, were paddling in the lily pads beside us. We soon discovered the outline of the beavers' dam at the outlet down below us, and as we spoke of the wonderful skill and industry of its engineers, a heavier ripple appeared coming from it in our direction. The glasses showed that it was a full-grown beaver apparently returning to his house after an inspection of the outposts. He came directly toward us until we could see his bright eyes and bristling whiskers. He had not seen us, but if he had been conscious of his audience he could not have devised more entertaining feats for our admiration. He swam about before us in circles, figure eights and other wonderful evolutions, ending his performance with

a resounding slap of his broad tail as he dived, doubtless for the entrance of his house, as we saw him no more that evening.

Sam now rejoined us and after a few preliminary smothered coughs and grunts sent forth a full mellow call echoing across the lake.

The practice of calling moose during the rutting season has been sharply criticized by certain writers on matters of sport. They contend that it is hardly a decent thing to do, and base their briefs on the proposition that it is unfair to call an animal within shot by appealing to its most blinding passion. Personally, I cannot see that there is any greater unfairness in appealing to one rather than to another of a creature's appetites. It is regarded as highly praiseworthy to sit in ambush by a carcass to await the coming of a hungry bear, the slaying of which will probably be no more dangerous to the hunter than the shooting of a doe. By the same token, we use our best efforts to deceive, outwit, surprise and bushwhack every living thing we pursue in still hunting, and seize every smallest advantage whereby we may get near enough to shoot it, in the back if necessary, and as if this were not enough, we enlist horse and hound in our warfare

against their fellow beasts. Coming down to strict analysis there is no such thing as fairness to the game in hunting. The hunter has his great advantage the moment he takes his rifle in his hands, and it has always struck me as rather absurd to decry any particular way he may choose to take the opportunity to use it, so long as the ultimate test remains his own nerve and marksmanship. For example, a hunter looking out over a barren suddenly discovers a moose standing in the open within shot, and drops it with a bullet through the heart. That is a great piece of luck and the event is memorable. Likewise if the moose be encountered while the hunter is paddling down a stream or lake, offering a fair broadside shot as it stands upon the shore, this too is excellent sport, but according to the critics, he who calls the moose to the barren or to the shore is without honour or sportsmanship. If there is unfairness in killing a baited bear or a decoyed duck, then it is unfair to call a moose, but not otherwise. Let me admit at once that one will often get a shot at a moose by calling him when one would never be obtained at that season except by blind luck if still hunting, but I do not think this has anything to do with the ethics

of the question. Indeed it suggests the sophistical argument that if the moose with its acute senses pitted against the duller faculties of the hunter will avail himself of his natural advantages, why should not the hunter avail himself of any means of offsetting them which his intelligence may devise? The moose lives in the thick woods, where still hunting is practically impossible with any stillness, until the snow comes to deaden the sound of one's footsteps and show the tracks of the game. The Norwegian practice of hunting with an " elk hound " in leash might be successful at this season, but I never heard of it being attempted in the Canadian woods, and if the hunter wandered aimlessly through the woods, which is about all he could do at that season, he would probably never see hide or hair of a moose in his journeys. If he would be content to stand guard at some well-trodden spot on the shore of a stream or lake for a week or two, he might get a shot, but there would be little enjoyment or sport in such an undertaking. All the forces of chance and nature are against the hunter coming to the moose, and if he is able to bring the moose to him, who shall say that it is unfair? Men of experience in moose hunting say that in the

western country the call is of no effect whatever, and the hunters of those parts are thereby freed from all cavil. Others question whether the bull comes in response to the call of sex or from the desire to do battle, in which latter case the argument of the critics is shattered for all time. My own experience has been that in each case where I killed after calling, the bull undoubtedly supposed he was grunting to a female of his kind, and I think that is the basis on which the call is answered in the New Brunswick woods. This admits the theory of the critics of moose-calling, but so be it. We all hunt for the excitement of the thing, in whatever way it may happen to appeal to us. One may find his greatest satisfaction in the tense moments of anticipation. Another forgets all else in the quick calculations for the shot. There are as many minds as men and those moments of exaltation come to each in his own way. That they may come is the real purpose of our quest. The spreading antlers and the furry hides are the mere tangible evidence of their occurrence, and so long as they may be attained, with due restraint from wantonness and the infliction of needless distress and suffering, criticism of the ways or means of any particular

manner of pursuit seems little more than captious. It is not intended that he who can find pleasure in the bludgeoning of a hounded, swimming deer or in the knifing of a drift-bound moose shall find moral support in this. Let him betake himself to the slaughter-house and leave the woods for those to whom the taking of life is not the all in all of sport, but that part of it mostly to be regretted.

As "The Cynic's Calendar" hath it, "Many are called but few get up," and that applies as well to moose as to men. As a matter of fact, comparatively few moose are shot through their coming directly to the call. Sometimes it happens that the approaching bull will come just so far and no farther, and stand hidden among the trees, out of sight and shot from the calling place. Then the hunter must stalk his game with all the skill he has, for the beast is on the alert, all nose and ears and eyes. More frequently it happens that though the bull may answer the evening call, he will not come out into the open until far into the night. In that case the hunter has his choice of lying out or going back to camp and returning the next morning as soon as he can see his sights, when the bull will probably still be in

the open. The call has its greatest value in bringing about these so-called "morning shots," nearly every one of which means a careful stalk for its accomplishment. In practice, therefore, the call is not the summoning of a passion-blinded beast to his doom at the hands of his ambushed executioner, but rather a means of bringing the animal within sight or hearing for a fair sporting shot at it, to be gained subsequently by the hunter's own exertions and skill. Sometimes the bull does come straight for the caller, and if there is still light enough for straight shooting he pays the penalty, even as does the duck that swings too confidently to the decoys. It may be, on the other hand, that when the moose makes his appearance after an evening call, it will be so dark that accurate shooting is an impossibility, and in this to my mind lies the one ground of reasonable criticism of this method of hunting the animal. In the darkness the animal will sometimes be wounded and get away, either to undergo a useless death or much suffering before eventual recovery, neither of which is pleasant to contemplate apart from the loss of the game itself. Confession and avoidance is the only plea to this, for such a misfortune does sometimes happen,

but so does it too in other modes of hunting, with perhaps more than equal frequency in the average of shots taken. A still hunter may see a patch of hair over the top of a ledge or through an opening in a thicket under such conditions that he knows that he must take the chance that offers or none at all. It is too much to ask frail human nature to lower rifle and about-face with game in sight. We would all like a broadside shot at a hundred yards at all our prospective victims, but in the optimism of the moment we take what the fates have sent us. To-day one's luck is good and the game drops with a bullet in the neck. To-morrow when a similar shot offers, the creature bounds away, struck in a less vital spot, to suffer and perhaps die far from all possible pursuit. In hunting in the mountains and on the plains, where long range shooting is the rule of necessity, the average game wounded to game clean killed is probably even greater than in hunting in the wooded country, where most of the shots are at comparatively close range, but no one has as yet suggested that there is any lack of sportsmanship in attempting these long chances where the probabilities, at least for the ordinary marksman, are all against a killing hit

at such distances. With the possibility of such a mischance in mind when moose calling, the only thing is to do the best one may to avoid it, and my own rule is, do not call too late. If you have had no answer up to an hour before dusk, go back to camp. Perhaps your bull will be out in the morning when the daylight is coming instead of going. If you have had an answer and the beast is shy and still at a distance at that time, again go home and return with the rising sun, or better yet a little earlier. Sometimes a bull will answer almost the first call and start to come. He arrives almost at hand, but as conditions are against attempting to stalk him from the calling place, and as he is still coming, the only thing to do is to wait. He is perhaps a laggard in his love and he comes slowly but still nearer and nearer. You know that the sun has set, but you could see your sights a few moments ago, and that very instant the moose had banged his horns on the tree trunks not two hundred yards away. Far be it from me to say what one should do under such conditions as these. On this day of which I write, I did what seemed right and best at the moment, and though no spreading antlers were the result, the whole

experience was one which I have never equalled. The setting of the stage was perfect. The time of waiting and anticipation the most tense and thrilling, and the complete climax wanting only through conditions which could not be known.

While we have been discussing the ethics of moose-calling, Sam, regardless of the pros and cons, has sent two more calls resounding towards the mountain-side across the lake. I had heard no answer, but there was still plenty of time before sunset. It had grown quite chilly and I was helping my wife with her ulster when Sam called the fourth time. As the echo ceased, the stillness was so intense as to be almost sound in itself, like "darkness visible." I thought I heard something half-way up on the mountain-side and listened. The next moment I knew I was right as I heard a bull's grunt plainly.

"An answer, Sam," I whispered, and pointed to the direction.

His face grew tense with excitement as he listened for a repetition of the sound, holding his horn to his ear like a megaphone. It came again in a moment. We all heard it this time, and there was no question about it as the answer came from the forest-covered side of the mountain across the

lake. In a moment we were in the canoe, my wife amidships, I at the bow, and Sam with the paddle at the stern. We stopped and listened again before rounding the end of the little island and leaving the concealment which it had offered us. We heard the smite of horns a little further to the right of the point from which the answers had come and a little lower on the mountain-side, showing that the bull was fairly on his way to the call. Sooner or later we should have to cross to that side of the lake, and it seemed best to do it now while the bull was still well back in the woods. A few noiseless strokes of the paddle soon brought us to the opposite shore, close in to the high grass which bordered it, with the canoe lying parallel to the course which the moose was apparently taking. It seemed a long time before we heard another sound from the creature, and Sam ventured another low call, holding the mouth of his birch bark horn close to the surface of the water. A low grunt came in quick response, much nearer but still well up the hill. A little later we heard another blow of his horns on a tree, and soon afterwards a soft swishing, as of the disturbance of low branches. Soon he was so near that in the perfect stillness we could hear

the sound of his hoofs, moving slowly, but still in our direction over the soft carpeting of the moss. Then came another long period of waiting without a sound. We had lost all track of the lapse of time, at least as measured by hours or minutes. When we had crossed the lake the sun was well above the western skyline of the unbroken fringe of evergreens. Now the sun had sunk below it, and though the sky behind the silhouetted trees was still glowing red, black shadows were already creeping out from them towards us in a manner that was most alarming, for it was evident that if the bull came out at all, the place of his advent would be among them. If by some happy chance he had taken his course towards the east instead of towards the west, he would have come out at the lower end of the lake where the waters still reflected the glowing colours of the sky, and the green of the grass and bushes along the shore was still undimmed. At our end of the lake the shadows grew blacker every instant. The last we had heard from the bull showed that he was very near us, probably not two hundred yards away in the woods, and in all probability he was still standing there listening. It would have been impossible to have made a landing from the

canoe to him, owing to the thickness of the alders and the swampiness of the shore. He would have heard the scrape of the canoe the minute the bow touched the bank. Sam called again very softly and splashed the water a few times with the horn, as if a cow were walking about in it. We heard the bull start again with a grunt, and I motioned to Sam to shoot the canoe out into the lake and try to get a position above the place for which the bull seemed to be headed, so that I might have the shadows behind me as much as possible, and be able to swing my rifle towards the left rather than to the right. A few strokes of the paddle did what seemed necessary, and as they were being made we could hear the bull on shore moving rapidly through the alders, which cracked and rustled as the big animal went through them. He had apparently made up his mind to come out and was coming fast. In a few moments the sound ceased and I watched the spot where I had last heard him, expecting to see the bull come through the brush the next second. It was still light enough to see that bit of the shore with some distinctness, and I felt confident of a successful shot if the bull proved large enough to fire at at all. Just then Sam

gave a call, imitating a bull's grunt of challenge, as things were not moving quite quickly enough to suit him. The next instant there was the sound of breaking brush a short distance to the right of the point I was covering, and then a tremendous crash and splashing from the very blackest of the shadows a little beyond. Sam swung the bow of the canoe further to the right and paddled silently towards the sound. I could see a black bulk looming against the other blackness and heard Sam whisper "It's a good spread." He was sitting higher in the canoe than I was, for from my position I could not make out definitely which end of the animal was which. As he had approached from the left, I figured that the shoulder must be at the right hand end of the black mass and levelled the rifle, holding low. The flash and the echoing report were followed by another great crash, and I knew that the animal was down. There was more splashing and then we heard brush breaking to the left, and remembering that I had once stopped an unseen bear under similar conditions, I fired the four other shots in the rifle, aiming at the points from which the sounds came. Then the perfect silence fell again, even more intense than before

in the darkness. It seemed as if the creature must be down or we should hear him in such thick woods if he were still running. Sam thought he had heard him drop, and in a few moments we were on shore with the lighted lantern. We soon found blood and followed the trail of it some distance up the hill. Then we lost it and it seemed better to give up the search and come over again in the morning to find the moose, which Sam felt sure was lying somewhere within a short distance. Back in the canoe we crossed the lake and made our way out to the river over the rough trail by lantern. We were elated at starting the season so successfully. The omens had been vindicated, and my wife had had an experience on her first moose hunt such as comes to few women, or men either for that matter. Her only regret was that she had not seen the moose at all. Sitting as she was on the bottom of the canoe low down, her opportunity for seeing was the least favourable, but the fact that she did not see the big creature within thirty yards of her will give some idea of how dark it was.

We were all impatient to be on the trail again the next morning. We found the spots of blood and followed the trail along to where we had lost

it the night before. William soon found it again, leading up the hillside. This seemed to him a very bad sign, for he said the moose would probably not go up hill if he were badly wounded. My wife and I followed up the hill for about a mile and then returned to the lake with hearts downcast with disappointment to await the men there and try the fishing. The trout were plentiful and hungry and rose to the flies half a dozen at a time, — not large fish, but averaging half to three-quarters of a pound. After about three hours of waiting William appeared on the shore and I paddled down to him.

“Where are the horns?” I said.

“He’ll grow another pair next year,” was the answer.

It appeared that the men had followed the trail, slight as it soon became, nearly four miles over the mountain and down on the other side towards the south branch of the river. At one time they must have been very near to the moose, for they found a bed where he had been lying, and farther on a second and a third one. The last two showed that they had been occupied but a short time, and had doubtless been made after the animal had been started from his first

resting-place. Here William had found evidence that one bullet had struck fair on the right shoulder, but at such an angle that it had come out in front through the lower neck instead of going straight through the body. The imprint of the horns on the ground showed that the head was not a large one, though of fair size. William's discoveries made it clear that the animal must have been standing obliquely to the shot instead of broadside-on as I had supposed in the darkness, in which case the shot would have been a fatal one at once. As it was, William was certain that the moose had only suffered a rather severe flesh wound, which would have no permanent results, as the tracks gave no sign of a broken leg or shoulder. I would rather have missed him clean than this, but there was no help for it, and I knew that I had lived moments such as might never come again, even as it was.

We had some of our trout, fresh from the water, for lunch, and in the afternoon went with William to the upper end of the lake where we landed him to hunt up a little pond he knew about not far away. Inside of half an hour he was back again. He had come within sight of the pond, discovered four moose in it, and had hur-

ried back to us without waiting to see whether they were cows or bulls. We followed him through the low princess pine over the ridge, and soon came to the edge of a bog in the middle of which was a long narrow pond, the lower end of it hidden in alders growing on its borders. We could see three black lumps in that part of the pond which was open to us, and in a moment or two the ungainly head and neck of a cow moose came up, dripping, beside one of them. Then two other heads appeared, both of cows, one of them holding a lily root in her mouth. The fourth animal had doubtless wandered up behind the alders, for it was not in sight. With so many cows about William thought that the vanished one was probably a bull, and we waited to see if he would not put in appearance again. The black flies bit like fiends as we sat on the moss behind two shielding junipers, but the possibility of a shot was a good one with the cows about, and they were interesting to watch in the meantime. The field glasses brought them very near and we could see every movement. They were after lily roots, and I was surprised to see how long they could keep their heads under the water. I had no watch with me, but I think two minutes

would not be an excessive estimate for the time they would be down. We watched them swashing and wallowing about for nearly an hour, until they too disappeared behind the fringe of alders.

On the way back to the canoe we blazed a good trail from our observatory for future use, as it seemed about the best one there was. The cow moose seemed to be living about the pond, and if there was not a bull with them already there soon would be in all probability.

The next night we called at the lake but had no answer. The next morning we found the tracks of a large bull just where we had landed to go over the ridge to the little pond, and followed them well down to the bog. He had evidently come over to the call during the night and gone back again to the less ethereal charmers of the pond. On the afternoon of the second day from this I went over to the lake with Sam, intending to have a look-in at the little pond, the wind being particularly favourable for approaching it, and then to call at the lake later if we found nothing in sight. It was the first time that my wife had not gone with me, but we had just returned that noon from an over-night trip in the hills, and this and the memory of the black flies

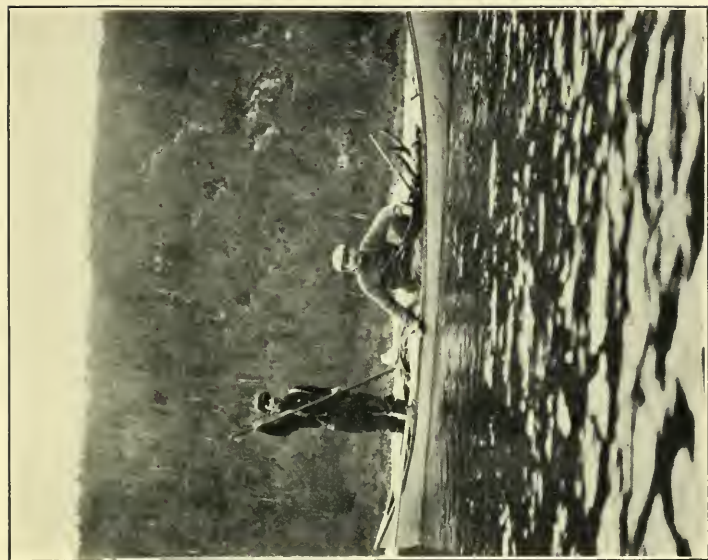
that other afternoon made her decide to stay in camp. It was arranged that in case of good luck I should fire two quick shots ten minutes after the event.

It was five o'clock when we left camp and we made quick time to our lookout at the edge of the bog. The wind was blowing hard directly in our faces as we peered out through the low branches of the junipers. Almost at the same instant we both saw a moose standing beside a bunch of alders on the far shore of the little pond. His head was down and partly concealed by the brush, so that it was impossible to tell much about it even with the glasses, but the shape of the animal showed that it was a bull and a very large and very black one, undoubtedly the same one whose track we had seen a few mornings before. In a moment he raised his head, and much to our disappointment we saw that it was a very small one, the antlers showing but slight palmation with only four or five points on each. We thought we would see how near we could get to him and crawled out from our ambush on hands and knees into a game trail through the bog so deeply trodden that the low bushes on the sides sufficed to conceal our movements completely.

We stopped at a tree close by the shore, not over thirty yards from the moose on the opposite side. He was entirely unaware of our presence, and we knelt there watching him as he splashed about. It would have been a great opportunity to take a picture, but of course the camera had been left behind. The bull was not feeding and seemed to have no particular object in view, and eventually wandered off into some woods at the lower end of the pond. We waited until he had disappeared before starting to return to the lake and had just risen from our knees when we heard the sound of splashing off to the right. We dropped down again and watched in that direction. In a moment two white objects rose side by side above the level of the bog and disappeared again as another bull gave us a momentary glimpse of his broad, newly polished horns. We could not see the body of the animal at all and thought that he must be lying down in the bog. We worked back to gain a better line of approach more directly up the wind, and leaving Sam I crawled along in another favouring game trail to take the shot. It was wet enough down there in the mud, and occasional logs lying across the trail added other difficulties to the path.

I moved along slowly, both by intention as well as from necessity, for there was plenty of time and I did not want to be out of breath for the shot when I came to the bull, whose whereabouts were still most indefinite. After crawling about sixty yards I stopped for an observation, and after a moment's waiting up came the white horns again from the bog about one hundred yards away, but still no sight of any other part of the creature. As the horns disappeared I moved on again, and judging that I had gone about half the intervening distance raised up for another look. This time I discovered that an arm of the pond which we did not know existed lay directly in front of me, and shoulder deep in the water, close in to the bank on my side, stood the bull. His head was under water and all I could see of him was the line of his back rising out a few inches, over the bushes. The animal had not been lying down at all, but standing as he was on the lower level, the bank and bushes had sufficed to conceal him from us. He raised his head in a few moments, snorted the water from his nose, looked about him and went under again.

There was no need for further concealment nor



ON THE RIVER.



HEAVING HIM OUT.

caution, for the bull was now deaf and dumb and blind so long as he would keep his head under. I rushed ahead until I could see the whole body clear of the bank and waited for him. As his head came up I fired and the whole fore-quarters of the animal came above the surface in a great convulsive leap. The bull fell upon his side and in his struggles attempted to swim across the narrow arm of the pond which would make it very difficult to get at him. Another shot and the white horns sank beneath the water. As I stood there waiting for Sam to come up, a cow moose came wading down on the opposite shore and stayed about watching us until we went back to camp.

There was our game, floating about twenty feet out in the water, and the next question was to get it ashore, no slight task for two pairs of hands, but before undertaking that we signalled the camp of our good luck, and the two shots went echoing over the trees exactly an hour after our departure.

There were a number of tall dead stumps sticking up here and there about the bog, and three of these we pushed over and brought to the shore, placing their ends on the back of the floating

moose. Sam stripped to his shirt and moccasins and worked his way out on this precarious platform until he was able to grasp one antler which still showed a little above the water. Light as he was his strange raft sank with him considerably, but by dint of much heaving and hauling he managed to shift the timbers from above to beneath the moose and float him on them near enough for me to lend a helping hand, and we finally managed to get enough of the creature on shore so that we could bleed him.

The bull was neither so large an animal nor so dark in colour as the one which we had first seen and rather light built and rangy. The next morning when William saw him, "Ah," he said, "he was a fighter," which is very probably the reason why the first bull deemed it advantageous to leave when he did. The antlers were not so large as they had seemed when they first rose out of the bog, and though their spread was but forty-seven inches they were well palmated and pointed, the brow points on both sides being unusually long and heavy.

These two episodes will perhaps serve to show the possibilities for continued intense interest and excitement which moose-calling can give as



HOMeward BOUND.

compared to still hunting at a time when tracking the game is impossible. To my own mind the listening for the answer, the great stillness, the long period of waiting, with its hopes and fears, and the final great crash from the alders gave the better sport, even though the shot proved so unlucky.

The Trout of the Nepisiguit

WE broke camp on the morning of August thirtieth in 1899 and started up the river from the Grand Falls, a party of three of us, each in a big Mic-Mac birch canoe poled along by two canoemen. The supplies and camp equipment were stowed in a long light-draught scow towed by two horses, for the water was low and the weight had to be distributed more than the burden of the canoes alone would allow. Sturgis had made the trip once before, and his stories of the Nepisiguit trout were inducement enough for Lund and myself to join him on a second expedition. The river affords famous salmon fishing from its mouth at Bathurst all the way to Grand Falls, a distance of some twenty-two miles. There it descends from its higher level, a hundred feet or more, in three great pitches through a narrow gorge, making as wild and tumultuous a scene as I remember.



HEAD OF THE GRAND FALLS.

Above the falls the whole aspect of things changes. The river becomes much wider and very shallow under the conditions usually prevalent in the summer and early fall, making it necessary for the canoeman to take advantage of every inch of water in the hardly perceptible channels through the rounded boulders with which its bed is strewn. This continues until you reach the Narrows, a high walled gorge through which the river rushes over foaming ledges. This of course was impassable for the scow, and the two big horses snaked it up the steep trail between the carrying places, through the bushes or over them, making it look as if there had been a landslide where it passed, while the men poled the canoes up through the swift water far below us.

Above the Narrows the river continues shallow and swift-flowing to Allen's Rocks, where there is another pitch of swift water which has to be portaged. It is not far from there to Indian Falls, where there is a long carry, but beyond this the river becomes more narrow and deeper, though occasional gravel bars and shallows still make it necessary to pick one's way.

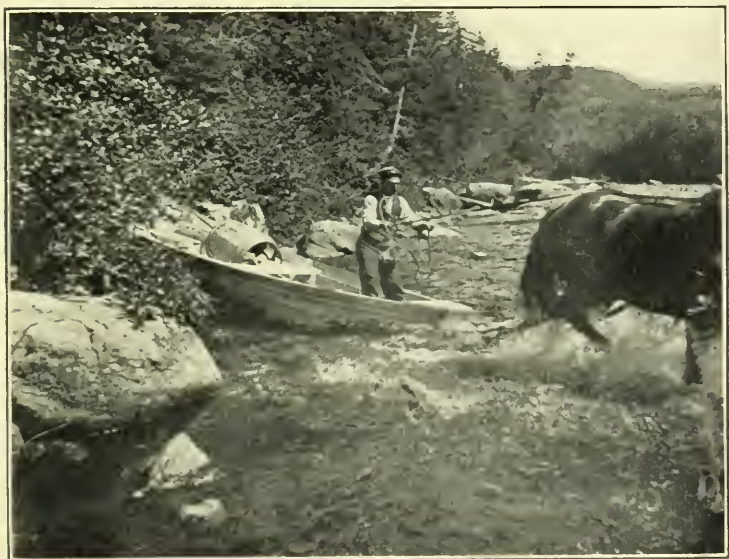
We left the scow at the lower end of Allen's Rocks on the third day, and I was glad to see

the last of it, for the sight of the horses toiling through the water over the boulders and ledges had gotten on my nerves. They would splash along on the uneven bed of the river, picking their way with their feet among the rocks, now knee deep and now up to their bellies. Now they would scramble up a submerged ledge and splash into the deep pool beyond up to their necks. They were as willing as could be and old hands at it, for only the fittest could survive such labours, but after the wonder of seeing them do what they did wore off it was a distressing thing to watch their toiling progress.

We kept on in the canoes to Indian Falls, and it was late in the afternoon when we started on the trail through the woods for the "52 Mile Bear House," where we were to camp that night, the guides going back to the teamster to help bring along the baggage. They had expected to make a sledge for this, but happening to find an old dug-out near the landing, they cut it in two, nailed slats across the open ends, and soon had two improvised drags into which they loaded our supplies and camp equipment, one for each horse. It was quite a novel bit of the mothering of invention by necessity.



THE SCOW.



LEAVING THE CARRY ABOVE THE NARROWS

The swift water and deep pools at the Narrows had looked sufficiently "fishy" to warrant a few casts, but with no results save a fingerling or two. I had tried again at several deep holes at the mouths of inflowing brooks with no greater success, and it was not until we came to the big pool at the foot of Indian Falls that we saw a trout of any size. Here I took twenty-two fish, but none over half a pound except one which weighed a pound and a half. Some of the places I had tried had seemed such certainties that all this would have been a little discouraging except for the assurances of my more experienced friend that no one ever thought of fishing in the lower reaches of the river and that our sport was yet to come.

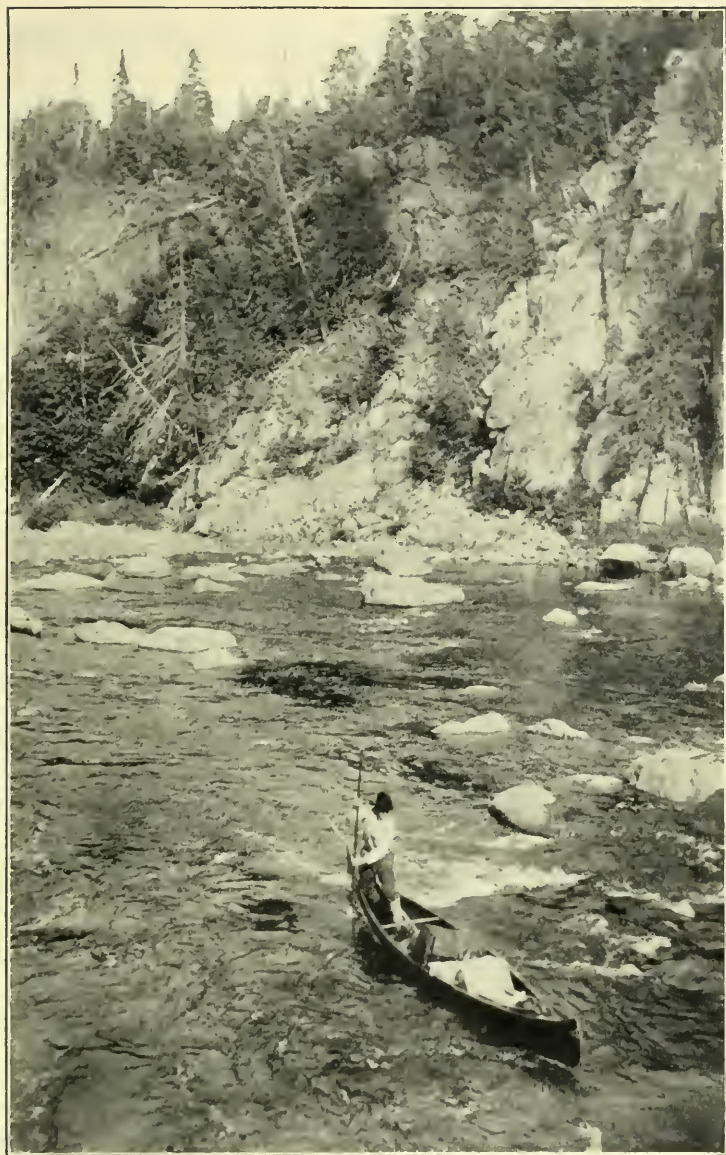
It was not far from our camp at the Bear House to the Devil's Elbow, where we were to make our permanent camp near the deep pool there, the first of a series of similar pools extending further up the river where the real fishing was to be had. We loaded the canoes with as many of our belongings as we should need to establish our new camp, and started off, my canoe somewhat in the lead, as Hughy and Ned were about the best team on the river.

As we went along we passed deep holes and swift eddies which were tempting enough, but I had made up my mind to wait for the appointed time and place and passed them by. Subsequent experience proved that this was just as well, for I never found fish of any size or in any number below the Elbow, and this although the conditions there for quite a distance down the stream would seem to be fully as attractive to the trout as those of the pools above.

We had just gained the still water at the head of a rapid up which the men had literally jumped the canoe, and turned the wooded point into the lower end of a deep still pool about sixty yards long.

"This is the Elbow," said Hughy, "now for 'em!"

It was then about eleven o'clock in the morning and the bright sun struck fairly upon the water so that the conditions were none too favourable, but we managed to swing the canoe into a position where we should throw no shadow, with a good chance behind me for the back cast, and I soon had my flies in the water. The men held the canoe steady with their poles thrust into the sloping bottom of the pool, while I lengthened



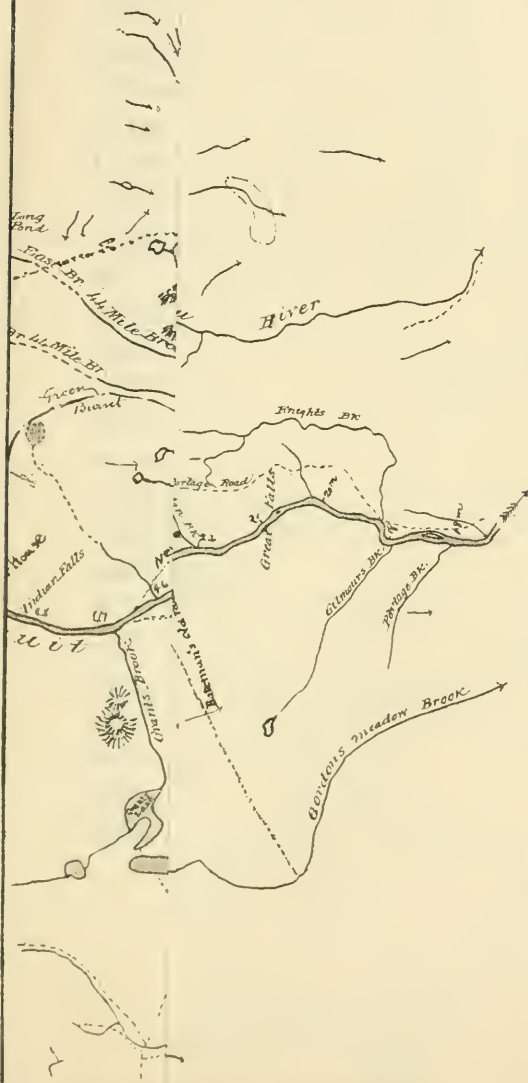
COMING UP THE NARROWS.

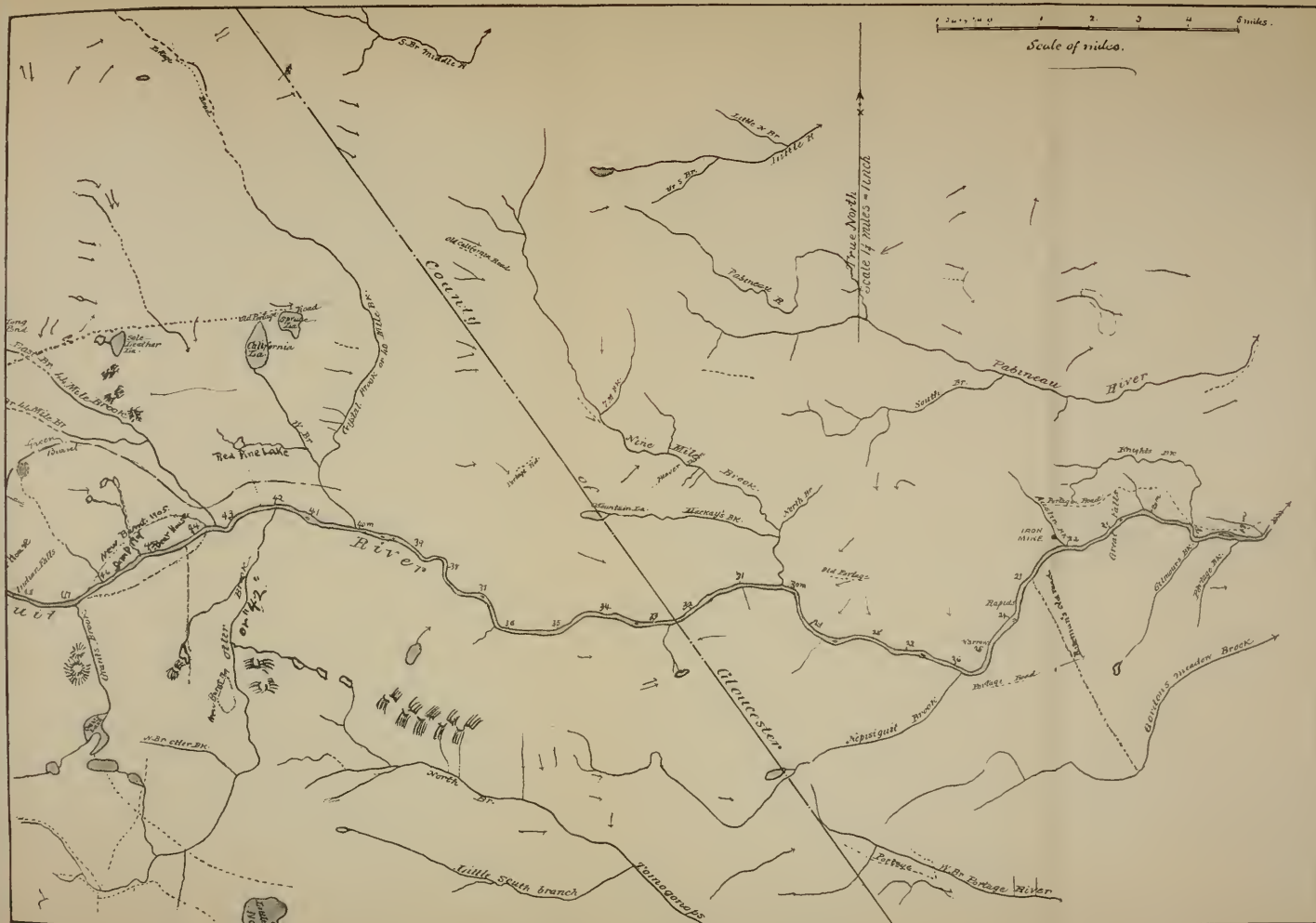
my cast out over the deeper water. I was using a brown hackle for my dropper and a Parmacheenee Belle for my tail fly, and had hardly gained my full length of line before the Parmacheenee was taken with a splash as it struck the surface. The fish hooked itself and I could tell by the impact of its strike that it was a good one. Out went the line with a rush while the reel sang joyously. This was what I had come for! I gained a little line and then off went the fish again to more music of the reel. It seemed to scream as it gave up its line. Then the fish turned and came back again, sounding to the bottom at the deepest part of the pool, immovable to the lift of the light rod, bent to a semicircle with tip at the surface of the water, while he tugged like a bulldog at the thing which held him fast. Then he was off again in another wild dash, but his strength was going, and reeling in as his rushes lost their power, it was not long before I had him on a shortened line where I could see the redness of his fins as he swam about, still fighting, in the clear water below us. It was some little time even then before he was ready for the net, but after one unsuccessful attempt when I thought he was surely gone, Hughy

lifted him gasping into the canoe and the fight was over. It was the biggest trout that I had ever caught, three pounds and a quarter in weight, and beautifully marked and tinted. The "moreness" which fishermen all know, even after such a prize, was stronger than ever with such a beginning, and after a few casts I struck another fish which fought like a hero, as had the first one. This one weighed an even two pounds. The line was hardly out again before the brown hackle was taken and another fine trout only a little smaller than the second came to the net. Sturgis's canoe came around the corner just then and took position farther up the pool. After a few casts he was fast to a splendid fish, which turned out to weigh exactly the same as my first one. I took two more, each weighing about a pound, and as what we had was plenty for our dinner, we stopped with these and poled the few rods to the landing at our camp ground. They were the finest trout I had ever seen in everything that makes a trout admirable, condition, markings and colouring, rather more silvery in general tone than the trout I had caught in other waters, and every one of them a fighter in his class. On the table they were delicious, fresh from the

2 3 4 5 miles.

Scale of miles.





MAP OF NEPISIGUIT RIVER — EASTERN SECTION.

water as they were, the flesh varying from white in one to salmon pink in another, but all quite free from the muddy taste which so often prevents a trout from being the delicacy it is always assumed to be.

Late in the afternoon, when the shadows of the trees had darkened the waters of the pool, I dropped down the river in one of the canoes and drifted with the current, casting ahead as I floated along. The flies had rested on the water for an instant when there was a double splash and a pair of gladiators had them. Then my hands were full enough! It was impossible to guide the canoe and handle the rod at the same time, but by good luck I drifted on a gravel bar at one side of the pool instead of keeping down the rapid, and there I had it out with them. As often happens the pair of fish fought against each other, so that the contest was not so hard a one as either fish could probably have put up alone, but the problem of netting them, weary as they were, was a serious one. By a second bit of good luck Sturgis had seen fit to follow my example and take a few casts, and had come down into the pool in another canoe with one of the guides. They arrived alongside in answer to my call for

help just in the nick of time, and as I lifted the two tired fish over my friend's landing net he gathered them in one after the other and in a moment they were safely in my canoe. The pair weighed three pounds and a half and two pounds and a half respectively. I did not wish to risk an anti-climax by further effort of mine; and after watching Sturgis take three or four smaller fish we poled back to camp to smoke our pipes and gloat over our good luck.

The next day was cloudy and rather windy, a much more favourable state of things for fishing than the bright sunshine of the day before. It was Sturgis's day! He took three splendid fish, one weighing four pounds, the other two each weighing three pounds and three-quarters. I took four fish, three and a quarter, two, one and three-quarters and one and one-quarter. Lund's largest of six fish weighed three pounds, his others all a pound or over. We could probably have caught three times as many right there at the Elbow pool if we had made a day of it, but we limited ourselves to taking no more fish than we could use, and as our luck came jumping at us with the first cast, the sport was fast and furious while it lasted but soon over.



ABOVE THE ELBOW.



LYMAN'S HOLE.

In those days the hunting season opened on the first of September, and as we were all eager to get our game we separated the next morning, each man with his own guides, headed for districts with which they were most familiar. My destination was Lake Upsalquitch, and as we were to travel by the river as far as Portage Brook, I took my rod along to try the fishing in the upper pools on the way. The first of these above the Elbow is Lyman's Hole, about four miles up the river. This is neither so large nor so deep as the Elbow pool. The river makes a sharp angle just at the upper end of it, losing part of its swiftness in a bogan before turning into the pool, but the current is much swifter than at the Elbow even then. We kept in close to the left hand bank of the river until we were about opposite the centre of the pool, within fair casting distance of any part of it. The men held the canoe with their poles, and a few casts gave me line enough to carry the flies to the upper end of the pool, just at the edge of the swift water running through the middle of it. They had floated down a yard or two when a broad gleaming back rose a little above the surface, and as it disappeared in an oily swirl, I felt a

strike which came up the line and down the rod to my wrist like a blow. The fish started up stream at first, but the tension was apparently too much for him and he turned, going by me in the swift current like a flash. Out went the line until it looked as if we might have to up moorings and go after the runaway in the canoe, for there was no holding him in the quick water, but finally he turned up-stream again, keeping in the more quiet water on the farther side of the current. I regained my line as he came on, and was drawing him slowly across the swift water to my side of the river when there was a great tug on the line. For a moment I thought I had struck some snag or rock and lost my fish, but the next instant the reel was screeching like a seagull with twenty yards of line run off and more going. It seemed as if the fish had gained redoubled strength in its rest after the first round, for it was fighting harder than ever, and again it seemed probable that we should have to cast off and follow it in the canoe. Just as in its other long rush, the fish turned up stream as it reached the lower end of the pool, and followed along the edge of the swift water, tugging hard at the line continuously but making no long runs. Finally

I had him directly across the current from me, and after holding him there awhile put the pressure on to bring him to my side of the river. He came very slowly, making an occasional short rush down stream, but the force of the water and the constant tension of the rod had slowed him down considerably and I soon had my fish where I could see he was a splendid one, bigger than anything I had caught yet. He had taken the dropper fly and I was watching him with no eyes for aught else as he swam about in the clear water, hither and thither now, as the little rod willed. Hughy was ready with the net, but as I began to lift the fish I noticed that the leader stretching off below him seemed unusually taut.

"There's two of 'em," shouted Hughy from the stern, and a sudden rush which obviously was not caused by the fish which I could see proved that it must be so. The unfortunate trout in the middle of the revived struggle was jerked here and there by the more active fish below, but materially assisting by its very inertia in its eventual undoing. Hughy netted the uppermost fish first, leaving the other swimming free while he disengaged the hook, a ticklish undertaking

ordinarily, but both fish were so nearly all in that it seemed safe to take the chance.

The first trout was the larger of the two and had been the first to take the fly. He weighed a strong five pounds. The second fish was a three pounder to the ounce and had taken the tail fly under water at the moment when the first one had seemed to come to again with such wonderful recuperative powers. Neither fish was hooked badly, and as we did not actually need them I wished to let them go again if the struggle had not been too much for them. There was a little pool in the rocks between the canoe and the shore, and we put them in there to see what they might do. They had been much exhausted, particularly the larger fish, as he had been on the line the longest, and for a while they lay there on their sides with very little sign of life, but in about ten minutes they had made so good a recovery that there was no doubt but that they were as well as ever. This was most satisfactory and seemed to warrant a few more casts, which landed three fish, two of two pounds each, the other a little short of that. Lyman's Hole had justified its reputation, and after giving our two captives their liberty we moved on up the river.

The sun was high when we arrived at Governor's Hole about two miles further on our way, but it seemed to make no difference with the trout. There was a swift current through the middle of the pool, and the fish seemed to lie in the more quiet water just at the edge of it. At my first cast, with hardly twenty feet of line beyond my tip, half a dozen leaping trout rose clear of the water to the flies, two of them striking as they came down upon them head first. They were a well-matched pair, each weighing an even two pounds, and after weighing them we put them back again none the worse for their somewhat rude treatment. At the next cast the Parmacheenee was taken under water as it drifted along down the current, but the glimpse of a broad tail which showed under the surface for a moment showed that this fish was a big one. He fought gamely, now tacking his way up against the swift current, tugging at the line, now turning down stream in a vicious rush that would take off all the line I had regained in less time than it takes to tell it. Here, as in the lower pools, the fish seemed to hesitate to go out of the deeper water, and always turned on their rushes down the stream as they came to the shallower places

at the lower end, or it would have been quite impossible to bring several of them to the net without following them in the canoe.

I do not remember how many trips up and down the pool the broad-tailed one took before I could lift him to the net, but it was a good many. Hughy finally lifted him inboard and the scales showed he weighed four pounds strong, fully as long a fish as the heavier one in the lower pool, but with less depth and thickness, a regular racer of a trout. The sport kept on with a strike at almost every cast until I had taken ten fish in all, one of three pounds, two two and a half pounders, the others ranging from one and a half pounds to three-quarters of a pound for the smallest one. They all went back into the river apparently as well as ever, none of them having been severely hooked. Such large hard-striking fish rarely are, according to my experience, the fly generally lodging in the front or corners of their capacious mouths where the tissues are almost bloodless and the wound consequently of the slightest.

As we kept on up-stream I busied myself with carving the weights of the different fish on the sides of a pine stick, which was the best I could do as I had no pencil or paper, though I felt that such

records were worthy of enduring stone. They were transcribed to my diary on my return, but the pine stick still has its place of honour among the archives.

There were some fine pools near the Blue Ledge, a short distance further on, much more promising in appearance than either of the two I had already fished that day, but the pine stick shows only a two-pounder and one of a little over a pound from their depths. We kept these and at the mouth of Portage Brook I took two more fish to add to my supplies for the trip in to the lake, two of two pounds each and two smaller ones, but both over a pound.

That was as far as we were to go on the river, as the trail we were to follow started in beside the brook, but it was enough, and I took the little rod apart, knowing that I had had a morning of such fishing as I had never supposed could be had anywhere.

We were away in the woods for two days, but without luck, and on the third day started back to camp again. I took three fish on the way down the river, thinking they might be useful at the home camp, a hard fighter at the mouth of the brook which took out more line than any fish I had

hooked, though he weighed a little under three pounds, and the other two weighing two pounds and a little less respectively. This bit of foraging proved to have been very good judgment on my part, as I found that both of my friends were still off on the hills, and as we had not yet killed any game the cupboard was bare enough.

Sturgis returned the next morning and in the evening we took the canoe and floated down to the Elbow pool to take a fish or two for our breakfast. We took turns at casting, and soon had two good fish, one of three pounds and the other of two. That was enough and we were on the point of turning up stream when a great fin appeared above the gleam of the dark surface of the water. Then a broad back rolled up lazily above it and disappeared again, just as one sometimes sees a porpoise playing on the summer sea. Amid those confined surroundings and in the dim light it looked more like a whale. I cast into the swirl that was still eddying where the fish had disappeared and the next instant the fish struck. He was well hooked and went up the pool like an express train. I gave him all the line he wanted, for I felt sure that he would not leave the deep water, and I was prepared to take whatever time was

necessary to land him if I stayed there all night. In due time his rushes became less frequent and he was finally no more than twenty feet away from the canoe when he sounded to the bottom. The tip of the rod was bent to the water as the fish held to the bottom, and after a few minutes of this I tried to lift him. It was quite impossible. The rod bent still further to the added strain, but there was not a movement from the fish. I tried this several times with the same lack of result, and each time the line pulled straight up and down without a responsive tug or wriggle from the other end. I knew there were some snags in that part of the pool and feared that my disengaged fly had caught on one of them. The chances were all against me if it had, as the first rush of such a heavy fish against the unyielding point would be certain to break the leader. On the other hand, if the fish were merely sulking it was advisable to start him, which would also settle the question of snag or sulk in short order. I asked Sturgis to drop the canoe down a few feet and put his pole down as near my line as he could without danger of fouling it. As he did so the tension on the rod relaxed in an instant. I reeled in as fast as I could, but it was not fast enough

to take up the slack. I had no idea whether the fish were on or off, but I kept on reeling in. The line was still slack when the water broke with a tremendous splash not a foot from the canoe and I caught another glimpse of a broad back and a fan-like tail as a parted leader and my dropper fly snapped back into my face. It was hard luck and possibly a little bad management too, though even if I had waited for him to start off again of his own accord he might have made the same desperate charge at the enemy with the same result. It has been written that "the biggest fish I ever caught was the one that got away," and so it was that evening. I do not know how much he weighed, but I have always felt that calling him half again the size of the five pounder would not have been an excessive estimate from what I had seen of him.

We spent most of our time hunting away from the home camp after this and only fished enough to lend occasional variety to our table when we were there. A few days after the fight with the big trout I went up to Lyman's Hole again early in the evening, intending to take a few fish and drift down the river on the chance of a shot on the way, when the clicking poles would not give fore-

warning of our coming. At the first cast I struck a heavy fish that fought away with seemingly untiring strength. A dozen times I almost had him within netting distance when off he would go again as strong as ever. There was no turning him and there was no holding him, and all one could do was to give him his own sweet will and take in line whenever opportunity offered. It was after sunset when I had hooked the fish and in those hills and forests the light goes quickly. Soon it was so dark that I could not see the line as it hissed through the water on still another rush of that tireless fish. Then it became so dark that we could not see much of anything and that sleepless trout still held us fast. Something had to be done about it, make or break. Hughy went ashore and made a torch from a roll of birch bark from a convenient tree, and holding it flaring above his head, waded out into the stream. I put the pressure on the fish and turned him sharply into the current and across it, keeping him coming with a steady pull until I could see him in the glare reflected on the water. Perhaps the light had something to do with it, but at all events he was soon over the net, and as Hughy lifted him out the fly dropped from a loop of skin on the

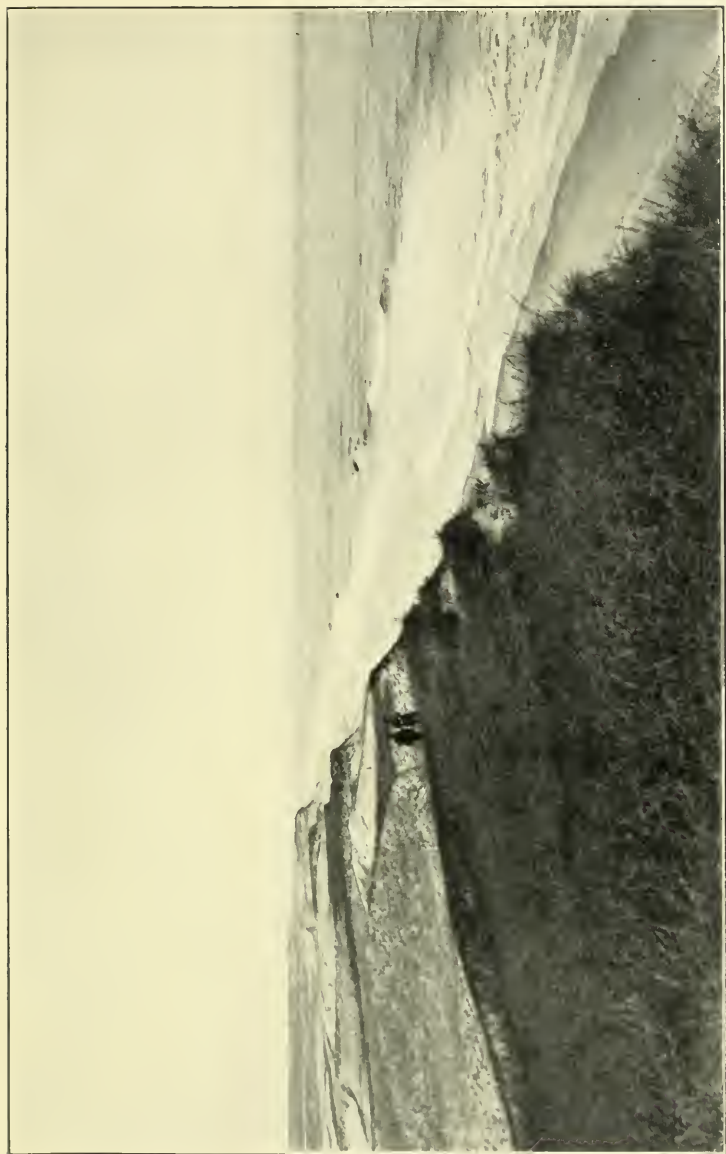
fish's side just back of the gills. This made it clear how the trout had been able to put up the fight he had, and also that we had taken him in out of the wet just about in time. Hughy had kept track of the struggle with his watch as nearly as he could after its beginning, and declared that the fish had been on the line at least forty minutes. At all events it had been long enough to spoil all chances for a shot, as it was then so dark it would have been impossible to shoot with any accuracy, so we hurried back to camp with our one fish as our trophy. It weighed four pounds and a quarter the next morning.

This was the last big fish I took and it was a sporting finish. Sturgis took a few more ranging between two and three and a half pounds, but we gave but little time to the trout with the calling season on and the bears in the blueberries. We noticed that the run of the fish was smaller as the time went on, and our guides told us that such was always the case. According to them, and their statements have been fully corroborated, the fish come down the river from the lake at its source with the spring high water, staying in the pools during the summer and making their way back again to the lake before the ice comes.

The four pools, the Elbow, Lyman's Hole, Governor's Hole and Portage Brook, seemed to be the only pools to which they resorted, although there were many more of seemingly equal attraction both below and above that stretch of the river within which these pools lie. At those four places one could have fished day in and day out that September with scores which my experience will perhaps suggest.

Concentrated as the fish seemed to be, I greatly feared that some day some one would come and do just that, and so it seems to have happened, for early in September in 1906 I cast my flies over the three lower pools again one day without raising a fish that weighed over half a pound and only one as large as that. The little things that came to my flies now and then would have been eaten alive by the old time denizens of the pools. We did see the charcoaled outlines of two good fish nailed to a tree at Lyman's Hole which had been caught some three weeks before. As my memory serves me one of them weighed four pounds, the other in the neighbourhood of three, and the captor of the larger of the two told me afterwards that the pair were by far the best fish they had taken on their trip.

Our men told us that since my first visit the lumbermen had taken to using dynamite in breaking up the ice in the lake in the early spring and that this had undoubtedly been very injurious to the fishing in the river. It is possible that the fish had started up the river again a little earlier at this second visit, though this could not have accounted for such dearth of trout of any size in view of past experience at the same time of year and even later, but whatever the reasons may have been it made one sick at heart to see how my forebodings had been realized and to think that the glory of the trout of the Nepisiguit had departed.



OUTER BEACH OF CAPE COD, NEAR CHATHAM.

Brant Shooting at Monomoy

THE little town of Chatham lies right at the elbow of the menacing arm of old Cape Cod, its white houses clustered about at the head of the harbour, which cuts far in among the dunes from the bay on the south side of the Cape. Small as the harbour is, many a staunch vessel sailed from it as her home port in the old days when the Cape Codder instinctively turned towards the sea for his livelihood and heaved his sea-chest on board the banker, whaler or packet. But all this has passed away, and a few Cape "cats," scallopers and shore fishermen, are all that go out of Chatham now.

On the easterly side of the town the land falls away in a great bluff of earth and gravel down to the broad sand beach. Wide as the beach is, the storms drive the sea across it right to the foot of the bluff, where it pounds and grinds, each

year encroaching farther and farther inshore. The ruins of two old lighthouse towers at what is now over the brink of the bluff show how the sea has evened accounts with those two guardians of the shore.

This beach stretches off to the south, widening into marshes on the inner side at first, then narrowing again to little more than a strip of white sand between the ocean and the bay, and then a greater widening of marsh and sand dunes which continues to its end at Monomoy Point. In former days there was a channel where the white sand now drifts about, through which vessels could go from the harbour out to deep water, but the shifting sand was making it more narrow and shoal each year, and a great storm in the late nineties put the finishing touch to it. The island which this channel made of all the land to the south of it was Monomoy island, and though now its benevolent assimilation has taken place, as is so often the fate of islands in these days, the long stretch of dunes and marsh still keeps the sonorous name, though island no longer.

A shallow creek cuts off a not large area of the northern end of the dunes, and this has its own name of Shooters' Island. Here in the early '60's



THE BRANT CLUB.



THE CURTIS BAR.

(See page 222)

the first gunning club in the country made its home, close by the flats and sand bars reaching out into the bay where the brant made their last stop on their way northward in the spring.

A little group of Boston men were the first comers to enlist the services of the local gunners and build their shanty, taking title to the land by squatter sovereignty. After them came some Providence men who built another shanty close by, and then a club from Manchester, N. H., put up still a third in the same sheltering hollow in the dunes. The rights of all were equal of course, as no one had any, but it soon developed that the unregulated assertion of such claims as each group might make was contrary to its own and the common welfare. Out of this condition of things came the Monomoy Brant Club, which took title to the property of the three merging entities, each of which received back again the use of the whole of it and the exclusive right to shoot during its own equal share of the season.

The season may be said to extend over five weeks on the average, beginning the last week in March and continuing through April. In the course of time the club grew to such an extent

that there was a party for each of the five weeks, the three original groups keeping their own individuality until one of them disbanded a few years ago, when the parties were reduced to four, dividing the full season between them. Each makes its visit in turn, the last party of one year being the first the next season, and so on, and such are the uncertainties as to the arrival of the birds and everything pertaining to them, that one chance may be said to be as good as any other.

2
1 The fact that the shooting at Monomoy is done in the spring may outlaw the sport to some minds. The only answer to such a criticism is that if it were not done in the spring it could not be done at all, as the line of the southern migration in the fall takes the birds far out to sea, except a few stragglers dropped by the shooters in their dories off Cohasset and the "South Shore." A few more may be shot about Nantucket, but I greatly doubt if the total bag of brant on the whole Massachusetts coast in any one fall ever amounts to one hundred birds. 2
1 Before the undesirability of indiscriminate spring shooting was generally recognized, a frequent argument of those in favour of the reform was that the stock of young birds would be much diminished if the mated birds

were killed on the way to their northern breeding grounds. By the same token, if the same birds had been killed during the fall before on their way south there would be an equal dearth of progeny. It does not seem to matter, therefore, whether the prospective parent bird be killed in the fall of one year or in the spring of the next. Its race is run in either case, but if the survivors of the fall flight be given a legislative immunity bath, as the current phrase has it, on their return in the spring, the birds run the gauntlet but once instead of twice, with corresponding benefit to future generations, both of birds and men. Once down the firing line is enough, and if it be but once it does not matter whether the course of the fowl be north or south, and it happens to be north at Monomoy during the short time the brant are there at all.

The brant is the *brenta bernicula* of the Atlantic coast, both of North America and Europe, a sub-family of the goose species, and common as they are, their history, both natural and temporal, is unique. The derivation of their common name is given in the books with little assertiveness of authority as the Greek word "Brenthus," meaning "an unknown bird." In the sixteenth

century its present scientific name was established, though the meaning of "brenta" was still obscure, but since then given as meaning the "burnt" goose, from the brownish tinges of its plumage. It is only in comparatively recent years that the nests of even the rear guard of the north-bound flocks have been discovered, far beyond the Arctic Circle, and even at 82° the brant have been observed still flying northward. It can easily be understood, therefore, when the North Pole was as yet unsought and when science was little more than legend and superstition, nothing should be known of the breeding habits of the brant. The logicians of those times argued that as no eggs of the brant had ever been seen, they did not exist, and therefore that the brant did not lay eggs and come from eggs like other fowl, but marvellous to say, sprang from the barnacles growing on the floating drift and sea-wrack. This legend survives in the word "bernicula." It would almost seem that there was some method in such scientific madness from the practical way in which this theory was applied, for the Church declared that as the fat, well flavoured fowl were sprung from barnacles, they were therefore fish and could be eaten in Lent!

My first visit to Chatham was in early April in 1885, when another youngster and I were given the necessary permission and wherewithal by our parents to spend part of our spring vacation there. Every variety of shore-bird or wild fowl which we had read about in our bird books seemed to have been shot at Chatham, and still another boy, a little older than we were, had told us of the shooting he had had at the Brant Club, where he had been a guest. Such fortune was not for us, but to Chatham we must go none the less. In those days the home-coming and the down-going shooting parties dined together on the day of the shift at the house near the harbour at which we were to stay, and the piles of fine birds in the door yard when we arrived, mostly brant, with black ducks, a goose or two, and some eiders in among them, made it seem as if we had arrived at the appointed spot. So we had, on the door-step, and that was as far as we were to get, as we soon learned. We had no shooting and cut our visit short, but I shall never forget my first impression of Monomoy as we sailed out of the harbour at sunrise that next morning. The water was quite calm and loons and other divers were swimming about almost at our moorings, dis-

appearing silently with scarcely a ripple of the surface as our catboat bore down upon them. As we rounded the sandy point at the mouth of the harbour, flock after flock of sheldrakes rose up, the males gorgeous in their mating costume. Little bunches of coots of different kinds skimmed along close to the water, and as we got out into the open bay the incessant gabble of the old-squaws sounded in every direction. Soon we came upon a flock of brant, which rose almost within shot and swung in towards one of the shooting boxes on the flats. We watched the birds as they went to the decoys, and the heavy reports told us that we had done a good turn to those favoured mortals in the box. Flock after flock rose before us as we sailed along, and when the sun finally came up over the dunes to the eastward, the rosy sky was dotted with flying fowl wherever one might look, while the air was resonant with their cries.

Long waving lines of eiders began coming up the bay with the southerly wind, the drakes looking like huge bumble-bees in their motley plumage. Far down the bay we disturbed a great body of brant bedded in the deep water, and the roar of their wings and the tumult of their cries when



GEORGE.



IN THE BOX.

they rose was an experience in itself. But what we saw that morning made it clear that, however many birds there might be in the bay, there were none for us, nor for any one except those of the elect in the boxes on the flats of Monomoy.

“ All things come to him who will but wait ” — sometimes. Six years later I had the opportunity to join a party which was given the privileges of the club for a week in March before the opening of the regular season, and then it was that I first met the “ local members,” the Bearse “ boys,” “ Washy,” patriarchal and gentle, George, grizzled and jovial, and Fernando, silent but cheery, and so uncomplaining of the misfortune that crippled him. Then it was that I heard the tales of the doings of “ Veenie ” and ‘Lonzo Nye, veterans of the past in the warfare with the brant, and read the records of the olden times in the big leather covered volumes, now dating back nearly fifty years. Flatfish, pitchforked on the flats at high tide, were fried for us with flavour indescribable. Quahaug pies were baked for us and hard clam chowders blended. Coots were stewed with many onions. Black ducks and eiders were roasted to a turn. We were introduced to hot buttered rum, the country’s wine, warranted

to start a glow in the coldest toes. These for the body, and for the mind tales of the sea and shore, of shipwreck and of salvage, and with this much of sport and of bird lore, and tales of quaint comedy of the town. We had everything except brant shooting, but the ice was still on the flats, making a barrier at the edge of the channel over which the brant would not fly. As "Washy" said, "It might as well be fire; they'd come over it just as quick."

We shot ducks on the marsh and a few from the boxes, but not a single brant, though there were hundreds of them bedded in the bay. We could, however, get an understanding of the ways and means of "branting" as the sport is carried on at Monomoy, even better perhaps than later in the season, as the men were still engaged on the preliminary work of setting out the boxes and decoys.

These boxes are made out of heavy plank, long enough to allow three men to sit side by side in them without too much crowding, and high enough to come about to the level of a man's eyes as he sits on the long broad seat fastened about a foot and a half above the flooring. Strong posts at each corner of the box on the outside

of the bottom serve as a foundation when sunk their length in the wet sand, which is then piled up around the box until a kite-shaped bar has been constructed with the box in the widest part of it, the narrow part dropping away in front. In the old days the bar was completed when this was done, only to be repaired again and again, as each tide washed away the shifting sand, so that the work was interminable. Of late years it has been the habit to cover the sand bar thus made with a heavy canvas tightly fitted over the sand around the rim of the box and buried deep in the flats at the outer edges. This keeps the sand in place, and the box thus equipped will last out the season ordinarily, barring some exceptionally heavy storm. These canvases are not used at the two southerly boxes as the water is not so deep there and the sand consequently subject to less violent attack, except at the highest tides.

An odd result of the adoption of the canvas bars proved to be that it was soon discovered that it was impossible to use the live decoys on them. The birds could get no foothold on the hard smooth surface of the canvas, and were blown about over it at the end of their tethers greatly to their distress, causing them to utter

anything but seductive calls to the passing flocks. The live decoys are still taken to the two southerly boxes occasionally, though each has its own flock of wooden decoys anchored before it, and if a choice had to be made between the live birds and their painted prototypes, the latter would be given the preference, for experience has demonstrated that the wild birds find a large body of wooden decoys more attractive than the two or three live brant tethered on the bar in the old-time manner.

As a general thing it will be found that a larger company of fowl, brant or other varieties, will not decoy to a smaller number. I do not mean to suggest that there is any mathematical accuracy about this, for a flock of a dozen fowl will often come to half a dozen decoys, but the larger flocks of twenty to fifty or more rarely will, even if they see them, but pass on, hailing them with invitations to join their heavier ranks. It would seem to be but another application of the principle that the greater body will attract the lesser.

It takes nearly a thousand wooden decoys to rig the five boxes, each "set" having about two hundred. Three decoys are fastened to the corners

of the strong wooden triangles which are anchored about in front of the boxes, where they are left through the season, as it would be impossible to take up such a number after the day's shooting and set them again for the next. This has its undesirable side, for the birds become used to the decoys and sheer away from them after a few experiences of cold-shouldered unresponsiveness from the wooden ones, or of the too warm welcome of the guns if the branters are in the boxes, but fortunately a bit of rough weather seems to dissipate their education for the time being. At such times their past familiarity with the decoys seems to make little difference, and they come to the painted wooden breasts as to the arms of long lost brothers.

The five boxes are placed as near the deep water as they can be with due regard to their nearness to each other, and the farthest postponement of the evil moment of being flooded with the rising tide. There are natural sand bars here and there all about the flats, rising a little above the general level of the broad expanse, and the boxes are set out on the most available of these, thus gaining the few inches of elevation which at times will make all the difference between

being able to lie in the box during the top of the tide, when the shooting will probably be the best, and standing on the edge of it in the wind and water for two mortal hours waiting for the tide to go down again.

Beginning at the lower end of the line is the "South bar," nearest of all to the shanties and only a short distance out from the border of the marsh. Here Fernando watched and waited, and not in vain either, for the silent little man was a splendid shot with his ten-gauge.

Next to the north comes the "Mud Hole," close to a deep indentation in the flats which gives the box its name. George tended this box during the years of my visit, and kept on there until increasing infirmities put an end to his following the brant at all. Before the old channel through the beach filled up, the "Gravelly" bar on its edge was an established location, but this had to be given up owing to the changed conditions, and the box was shifted to the "West bar" far out on the western edge of the flats. This box was "Washy's" abiding-place, and like the next two on the line, at the "North" and "Curtis" bars, is canvas covered, as the water is deep and the waves sometimes high at these outposts.

The "North bar" was tended by George's stalwart son Russell, strong as a young moose and an excellent shot. The "Curtis bar" only came under the jurisdiction of the Brant Club in recent years. Before that the then captain of the life-saving station held the location until he lost his job on the beach. Then he joined forces with the branters as a "local member," but left them and the Cape after a season or two and never came back again. His squatter title to the bar was absorbed by the Club and his enterprising young nephew "Natty" tended the box there by right of inheritance.

It takes about two weeks to do all the preliminary work, for it can be undertaken only at low tide. Sometimes a sudden storm will level an unfinished bar to the flats again, or a canvas will wash out, bringing collapse to the whole unstable structure beneath it, but the "local members" of the Club regard these vexations as merely a part of the day's work, and by the time the first party is due everything will be ship-shape and in readiness.

So were the boxes made and manned when I had my first opportunity to go to the Club during the shooting season. We left Boston on the 5th

of April in a snow-storm, for the spring was late in coming. The ground was white when we arrived at Chatham, where we had dinner with the returning party, whose big bunches of fine birds lent additional fervour to our normal enthusiasm. We changed into our heavy shooting clothes, rubber boots and oilers, and were soon aboard Captain Bill Bloomer's catboat headed down the bay for Monomoy. It was cold and bleak, and as a big flask was on its round it was handed to the Captain, a rugged veteran of seventy, over six feet in his hip boots and with hands like hams. As we afterwards heard it said of him, "When Bill Bloomer was a young man he could lick his weight in wild-cats." The Captain did ample justice to the brand and wiped his bearded lips with a huge mitten.

"In the old days," he said reflectively, "you couldn't go into a dinin'-room in Chat-ham but what you'd see a bottle of old New England rum a-settin' on the table."

Then he sighed and was silent for a moment, adding, "You don't see that nowadays."

As the memories of former times became more vivid in this line of thought the Captain spoke again.

“ My grandsire used to say that before he went a-gunnin’ he wanted just enough of that old New England rum so’t when he put his gun up he’d see a blur about the size o’ one of them old half-dollars right over the muzzle of his gun; and my grandsire used to say that when he see a bird fly into that blur he knew he had him.”

This seemed to warrant a toast to the memory of that worthy ancestor, which soon inspired the Captain to relate one of the old chap’s adventures as he had heard it in his boyhood.

“ There was some whistlers in the river and my grandsire built a blind down on the point and sot there waitin’ for ’em to come out. The whistlers was up the river from the blind and swimmin’ down as nice as could be when an old gray gull come floppin’ along up the river. He seen the blind and my grandsire a-settin’ in it and he let off a screech. ‘ Here he is, here he is,’ said the old gray gull, and the whistlers riz and flew off and he didn’t get no shot. The next day he tried it again, and just as the whistlers had swum almost within shot, along came the old gray gull again, and the old gray gull he let off another screech, ‘ Here he is, here he is,’ and the whistlers riz and flew off and he didn’t get no shot. Then

my grandsire decided that before he could get the whistlers he'd have to get the old gray gull, so he built two other blinds along the river and went back the next day and waited for him. By-m-by he seen the old gray gull come floppin' up from the bay, an' the old gray gull he seen the first blind and he stopped and horvered and looked down in the blind and didn't see nothin' an' he let off a screech. 'Ain't here, ain't here,' says he, an' he come down a little outen the air. Then he seen the second blind, an' the old gray gull he stopped an' horvered an' looked down into the blind an' didn't see nothin' an' he let off another screech. 'Ain't here, ain't here,' says he, an' he come down a little more outen the air. Then the old gray gull seen the third blind an' stopped an' horvered an' looked down into the blind, an' then my grandsire laid it acrost him, an' the old gray gull let out a screech, 'Oh, hell,' an' that was the end o' him. An' a little later the whistlers come a-swimmin' down the river an' my grandsire bagged six on 'em."

We put up a good many flocks of brant as we sailed down the bay, and as we waded ashore at the Mud Hole we saw what looked like a brant sitting on the bar close up by the box. The tide

was low so that there was no one in the box, and if the bird was to be bagged one of us must do it. My gun case was the easiest to get at, and I soon had the piece put together and loaded. The bird jumped about forty yards away and the next moment I had shot the smallest and thinnest brant I had ever seen. Its flight was strong and it seemed healthy enough except for its thinness, and what it was doing up there on top of the bar was rather a mystery to every one. A few days later some gunners from another club called on us and told of the loss of one of their tame decoys which had escaped in some way. For some reason this made things seem clearer to us, though the fate of their bird is still probably as much of a mystery to them as ever.

That night we drew for the boxes, two to each box, each pair to move up the line on successive days from the box thus drawn, and then down to the lower end again. My pair drew the Curtis box for the first day, and though this is usually regarded as giving the best chance, we had no shooting, flock after flock sheering off from the decoys just out of gunshot. In addition to this hard luck, the tide drove us out, making it necessary for us to stand there on the box until we

could bail the box out again, which was cold and dreary enough. It is a long tramp to the "Curtis bar" and back, a mile and three-quarters or more each way, with deep wading a good part of the distance either going out or coming home, this depending on whether you are to start in on the ebb or the flow of the tide, and though its prestige is or used to be the highest, I have always thought that one could pay a little too dear for one's whistle at the "Curtis" since my first experience there.

A revised allotment sent us to the "West bar" with "Washy" the next day. There was not much doing, as the wind all died away after we had been out a short time. This kept the waves down, however, and enabled us to stay in the box through the flood to the ebb. We had four birds, two singles, which my companion and I dropped in turn, and a pair which fell out of a small flock at the joint salute of "Washy's" gun and mine. It looked as if this was all that was coming to us, as what flight there had been had stopped entirely. We could not go ashore as the tide was at its highest and the water too deep for wading, so my friend and I dozed over our pipes, leaving "Washy" to keep lookout.

“Keep down and look over that corner of the box,” he finally said. As we did so we saw half a dozen brant swimming up within forty yards of us almost on the level with our eyes, such was the height of the tide, with fifty or more following after them. There were no thoughts of dozing after this sight. It looked as if an old time “big shot” was almost certain, for shooting at birds in the water is not only good form but practically obligatory at Monomoy, owing to certain customs as to the division of the game between the visitors and the “local members.”

“Lay over when I tell you and fire when I count three,” said “Washy,” and we left the strategy of the shot to him while we crouched ready for the word. At the first signal the three guns were levelled over the bar in front. The birds were about fifty yards away now, but in a position on our left quarter where all our guns would bear, which had not been the case before. They were not very well bunched, but there was a group of a dozen or more very close together in about the middle of the flock, and as I was the middle gun I covered them. They were paddling about and shifting their positions every instant, and it seemed as if the word was very slow in

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coming. When it did come some one fired at the sound of it. In an instant the flock was in the air and in another it seemed as if half of it was tumbling back again. As a matter of fact we only dropped seven birds, all after they had jumped, so far as I could see, for it did not look as if the two barrels fired at them in the water had touched a feather. I have always thought that the trouble was that the group which I was covering looked equally good to the other two guns, and that all our fire converged on those few birds.

When two or more men are occupying a box or blind, the only way is for each to cover his own part of the flock. If the shot is to be taken at birds in the water, the right hand man will take the right hand end of the flock, and so on down the line, each keeping out of his neighbour's territory. If a flock is coming in across the line of shot, the leading birds should be allowed to pass until the outside gun can bear on them, each of the others in the line covering his own relative part of the flock as best he can.

I have always thought that shooting in company was much less satisfactory than shooting alone, as in the volley firing one can never be sure

whether it was one's own shot that brought down any particular bird or not. One gun can attend to singles and pairs as well as two or more, and though a greater number of guns well handled will drop more birds out of a big flock, the satisfaction to each individual is certainly much less except as to the mere point of numbers.

I have spoken of this episode at the "West bar" somewhat at length, as it was the only occasion when I have seen a large flock of brant swim in to the decoys. In the old days such occurrences were more frequent, according to the records, probably owing to the use of the live decoys roosting on the bars instead of the wooden ones floating in the water. According to those old accounts the birds would swim up and even land on the bars, and over forty were killed at one discharge from one of the boxes — the old "Gravelly," as I remember it, after the birds had bunched together the thickest.

Our turn at the "North bar" came two mornings later. The stars were shining when we left the shanty and the tide was still well up on the marshes. We were shooting on the ebb that morning, which meant a long wade to the box just as soon as the water was low enough to allow

us to get there at all. We had left the submerged marsh and were travelling slowly over the flats, picking our way from one guide-stick to another in the darkness, when my companion discovered that he was over his depth already. His hip-boots were swamped the next second, and I knew that my turn would come in a few yards more. He turned back, leaving me alone out there in the waste of waters, the low outline of the box still lost in the gloom, to wait for the tide to go down still further. It was very cold and very lonesome, and after about half an hour of it I decided to turn off for the "Mud Hole," which I was quite sure was not to be occupied that morning. I could see George piling up new sand around the box, and toiled across the flats to him as to a haven of refuge. It was a gray morning with a strong wind from the northeast. There was no real sunrise, but as it grew lighter flocks of brant began coming up from the southward. A flock of about thirty saw our decoys and turned in, coming straight for them. The leading birds had set their wings and were right over the decoys when George gave the word to fire. I was on the right and was holding ahead of the crowding leaders when I pulled the trigger. I do not know

what George was doing as to his calculations, but at that very instant the hovering birds came to a complete standstill in the air, those behind piling in with those in front, and neither of us dropped a bird. The next second the birds were whirling in every direction, and to make the fiasco complete we were equally unsuccessful with our second barrels. I have never had such a shot at a large flock of brant well bunched, when everything seemed exactly as one would have it. Nine times out of ten the shot as calculated would have been entirely successful, but this was one of those tenth times that do occur, and the unexpected slowing up of the birds while I was swinging ahead of them sent the shot far afield.

A single bird came in a few moments later and his downfall helped to restore my shaken confidence. Then a small flock swung by, somewhat strung out, each of us making a pleasing double. Another single bird dropped to my gun, and two more, wing-tipped, but out in deep water, unfortunately, at our volley at a flock that sheered off after promising great things.

By this time the decoys were resting on the bare sand. It seemed useless to stay any longer, as brant will very rarely fly over any solid land,

but great numbers of birds were still coming from the south and it was hard to turn one's back on them. Presently we saw two brant, apparently stragglers from a flock ahead of them, turn in towards the decoys and make straight across the flats. On they came right up to the box, where I dropped them right and left. The six handsome birds, known to be to my own gun, made a very satisfactory ending to the unpromising beginnings of the morning.

More birds than ever were coming when we left the box, and if we could have had our decoys afloat an hour more we would undoubtedly have had a record morning, as the flocks seemed to want to decoy, but balked at crossing the bare sand. We hoped for great things on the afternoon tide, but the wind went down and not a shot was had at the "Mud Hole" the rest of the day.

The experience of the morning will not seem an unusual one to gunners who are accustomed to following the fowl in localities where the game is more plentiful and the shots more frequent, but at Monomoy, where the time in the boxes is so short and volley firing the rule, it was rather an exceptional occurrence. I never succeeded in doing as well on any one of three subsequent



A FEW OF THE BRANT.

trips. On two of them more birds were killed at the boxes in which I was lying than on this first visit, but with one exception no particular shots seem to stand out in my memory.

I was at the "North bar" one morning alone with Russell. A good many birds were flying, and though they were shy, so that we soon gave up our number four shot for number twos, we managed to bring six birds to bag, with three or four wing-broken ones lost out in the deep water. Three brant came along, flying one behind the other, directly across us, and though they showed no intention of decoying, turned in near enough for another long shot. I led the first one as they passed, hoping to drop him and take whatever Russell might leave, if anything, with the second barrel. We both missed. The birds seemed to pivot on their tail feathers at right angles to their course, and in an instant were headed directly away from us, the tips of their wings almost touching. I held on to my bird, and as our second shots boomed out all three of the birds dropped stone dead. Russell told me afterwards that he had left the first two birds to me as they came past, and held to his own bird when they turned, so that we each killed our own birds on

the outside, converging on the middle one with the outer pellets of each charge.

That same day we saw an amusing catastrophe which occurred to one of the party who was lying in the "West box." We were watching a flock of birds which finally went into their decoys, five of them dropping to the shot. Several of the fowl were wing-broken and in a moment we could see the three occupants of the box climbing out in hot pursuit. One of them was a very large man, so large that when we saw him stumble and quite disappear under the water he made a very large splash. It appeared that in his enthusiasm he had quite forgotten the anchor lines on the decoys and had tripped over one of them, and though his mischance brought on a very bad cold for a day or two, the episode was most educational to the rest of us.

On my last trip, which occurred the latest in the season of any of them, the shooting was very poor, but the reason of it furnished an interesting experience. The northwesterly wind which had prevailed during the first two or three days died away one afternoon while we were in the boxes, leaving the bay as calm as a mill-pond. There were hundreds of birds about, plainly visible with


their black and white markings as they sat on the unruffled water. Then came a shift of the wind to the southwest. A flock that was sitting a few hundred yards off shore from us began to gabble even more vociferously, and in a few moments rose up, swinging in broadening circles into the air, and then headed due northeast across the beach. Another flock soon followed them, going through the same evolutions until the birds got the desired altitude for their course before the favouring wind. This kept on until every flock that was in the bay so far as we could see had joined the great procession. Other big flocks came up over the horizon from the south, all following the same straight line of flight, and so it was when we left the boxes. All night long the brant were flying over our heads across the beach, so low that we could hear their calling as we lay in our bunks. The next day there was not a brant in the bay, and the remainder of the trip showed little change in the conditions.

One who has been to Monomoy, whatever luck he may have had there, will never look back upon it with anything but pleasant recollections. One works hard for one's shooting, for the long early morning wadings to the outer boxes, clad in heavy

rubber boots and oilers, are slow and toilsome. The waiting in the boxes is sometimes long and cold and barren of result, but the follower of the wild fowl is used to that. But the great Out-of-Doors is there undominated, infusing new vigour into one with every breath. The best good fellowship is there, and when one finds himself in full communion with nature and his kind, there is little left to be desired.

It so happens that even as this is being written news comes from the Cape that a great storm is making inroads upon the little harbour and along the beach, so that it may well be that even now the old landmarks have vanished and a new Monomoy is in the making on the sands.

Battery Shooting

 FIRST experience in a "battery" or sink-box on an off day might well tend to convince the neophyte once for all that there were few enjoyable features connected with this manner of pursuit of the wild fowl. He would doubtless relate how he was roused from his slumbers to dress by lamp light, commanded by his mentor to push down the undesired breakfast, and rowed, shivering, through the chilly darkness to a coffin-shaped box anchored in a waste of waters in the middle of a horde of bobbing, wooden decoys, where he was abandoned to his fate with the parting instructions to watch out and keep his head down. He would tell of the "crick in the neck" which accompanies the too literal obedience to the last command and the difficulties in the way of a complete compliance with the first. It would appear that all the birds he saw had the crafty habit of approaching either

from behind or at his right shoulder, inside the arc of safety, and in crescendo, that the battery leaked, that the gentle wavelets slopped over it and down his collar, and that altogether it was an over-rated form of amusement.

Indeed, it is conditions and not theories which confront us in the battery. Each one of the possibilities suggested will make its appearance sooner or later. The early rising is imperative. "Be set out by sunrise" is the only sure rule, as more birds will be shot in the next three hours as a general thing than during all the rest of the day.

Until the early rising is established as a habit, the taste of food is almost nauseating at so near the time when the system is at its lowest, but the breakfast should be worried down, for shooting, like walking, is not good on an empty stomach, "no matter whose it is," and after the first morning or two one finds matters readjusted to the new requirements.

Those last hours of starlight are generally the coldest of the day, and the gunner should go forth warmly clad, with honest wool next his skin, over all. A pair of oil-skin trousers, preferably very dirty to neutralize their colour, belted at

the waist to avoid the pull of the suspenders on the shoulders, and cut off at the knee, will add greatly to his comfort if water should get into the battery, as it generally does in one way or another. The hat is an important item too. The ordinary cap does not have brim enough to shade the eyes from the glare of the early sun if the battery should face that way, and the brim of the ordinary felt hat is uncomfortable to lie on and also shuts off one's lateral field of vision. The solution of the difficulty was found in an old felt hat, the brim of which was cut off except enough of it in front to make a vizor. This most disreputable looking head gear met the various requisites admirably.

A battery is a cramped affair at best, being as it is but a little longer and a little wider than its occupant, with just sufficient depth to conceal him when lying extended on his back, and the gunner must make both comfort and convenience from these crude conditions or much vexation of body and spirit will be his. In spite of the obvious desirability of keeping one's head down, none the less one must not lie prone, for though the gunner may thus become the more invisible to the birds, so do the birds to him if they approach

from any direction except directly in front of him, and even then if flying low, close to the water. The result of lying low will be that the birds will be allowed to approach too near for the best results, many good chances lost entirely, and one's shots taken hurriedly as the birds suddenly appear in the limited field of vision immediately above and in front of the battery. The best way is to arrange a cushion or your oil-skin coat or whatever may be at hand, under your head, so that your eyes will just clear the level of the sides of the box. This will be much more comfortable, and open up nearly the whole panorama to you, while a slight turn of the head in either direction from time to time will keep you posted, as well as may be, as to coming events from the rear. Your head will stick up a little, but the decoy placed crossways on the end of the box, and one on either side at your shoulders will make it quite inconspicuous enough. Another decoy should be placed across the foot of the box to conceal the inside of it from birds approaching from that direction in which its length lies.

Next after a comfortable and adequate arrangement for observation come the ways and means for instant action. The shell box should be where

the hand can find fresh shells of its own motion. The muzzle of the gun should rest over the foot board, never inside the box for a moment unless you wish to risk blowing a hole in your frail craft, and a soaking for yourself or worse if you are lying in deep water. By tipping the gun a little against the side of the box you will be able to keep it in position right side up, with the grip of the stock where your hand can grasp it without visible movement as soon as a bird comes in sight. This matter of moving about is of the utmost importance. If you see that a bird has noticed your decoys and is coming in, keep the position you are in, no matter what it is, without the turn of the head or the movement of a hand, until it is time to take the shot. The bird probably has its eyes on a bunch of the decoys, and will pay no attention to you unless some sudden instinctive movement towards better concealment distracts its eye. If due observance is given to these general details the rest depends on the birds, one's own watchfulness and the man behind the gun, and the experiences to be had in a battery are so unique and varied that the sport has a fascination peculiarly its own.

The bays and shallows are never more beautiful

than in the soft light of the early morning. The great sun rising from the sea is a spectacle in itself. The consciousness of your position out there alone upon the waters, with the world and his wife still tucked up in their blankets, lends an eeriness to the solitude around you, and with it all is the zest of the hunter instinct within you, keyed up to concert pitch as you lie there with eyes and ears alert for what the fates may send along.

My first knowledge of battery shooting was picked up on the broad shallow lagoon on the New Brunswick coast across which I have so often sailed to the shore bird beach. It was obviously a fine feeding ground for the wild fowl, and the tales told by our boatmen about the quantities of ducks, brant and geese which appeared there later in the season fully bore out its possibilities. Thibedeau spoke with enthusiasm of the brant, "hund'eds and t'ousan's of dem" so that the bay was "black, black, black," which was very black indeed according to his method of expression, any given condition increasing in degree according to the number of times the descriptive adjective might be repeated. These rhapsodies always occurred early in Sep-

tember, when half a dozen black ducks and teal was the average bag for a morning in the battery, apparently a mere foretaste of what was to come. The local gunners said that about October 10th was the height of the season for brant, and in 1904 I arranged to be there to meet them. I figured that if I began shooting on September 25th, there would be two weeks during which the sport would be constantly growing better, with my third week on top of the wave. Ordinarily this plan of campaign would have been as good as could be devised, guarding as it did against the possibility of premature climax, but that year the birds were late in coming, and though I had good sport, it was not until the last two days that I began to appreciate what might have been, had the cold weather come on a little earlier.

On arriving at the old farmhouse I learned that the genial Thibedeau, my boatman of former years, had died the summer before, but young Jack, the junior member of my host's family, had grown into a strapping young fellow since my last visit, and no one could have asked for a more willing and helpful assistant than he proved to be. The boy comes to manhood early in the back country where there is always plenty for

every pair of strong hands to do. Since I had seen him Jack had earned money to buy his own boat, had made his own battery and decoys with his own hands, and now stood in his hip-boots a full equipped bay-man.

Perhaps a few words more in respect to the battery and the decoys may be in point before we begin to use them. "Sink-box" is more descriptive of the contrivance than the more formidable "battery," as it is primarily a box, to be sunk to within three or four inches of the surface of the water. To accomplish this, other boxes are nailed on the outside, all along the sides and ends, in which ballast is placed to bring it to the desired level. The freeboard is so low that the least roughness of the water would send its slop over the rail. To prevent this four light frames or "wings" covered with canvas are hinged to the ballast boxes to float upon the water at the sides and ends, and with this outer defence adjusted it is surprising to find how much buffeting the box will stand. An anchor is tied at the head of the box and a second one at the foot is often a convenience in case it should be desirable to change from lying in the usual position directly down the wind, either to avoid facing the direct



THE BATTERY.



AN OFF MORNING.

glare of the sun or to gain better opportunity for observation of the flight of the fowl. Ordinarily the position into which the box will swing from the anchor is the best, as the gunner will then face down the wind, and have his best opportunity when the birds swing up into it, as they have to do to alight to the decoys. The arrangement of these is a matter in regard to which most gunners have pet theories of their own. First of all have plenty of them. Place them thickly around the box to help conceal it, tailing them off above and below it, so that the main flock will float in the shape of a kite with the box in the upper end. Then set out two or three little groups down to leeward of the main body on the left quarter, if you are a right-handed shot. If you are using goose decoys with your ducks or brant, set them out well at the head of the main flock, separated a little from it, with three or four together out on one side in whichever direction you can swing the best, for geese have a tendency to light to windward of a sitting flock, and this arrangement will bring them well in. Black ducks, on the other hand, have the habit of sneaking up to the tail of a flock, particularly if flying alone, and the little groups on your quarter will

generally prove more attractive to them than the main body of decoys. These suggestions will ordinarily prove adequate to bring the birds within good range if they will come at all, and into positions convenient for the shot, but anything may happen at times and all past experience seem an exploded theory, such are the vagaries of the fowl.

There was a fair wind across the bay when we took the boat that first morning, which was fortunate as we had the box in tow, but we made good time to the shoal on which Jack had decided to set out, a little over a quarter of a mile inshore from the outer beach. The water was shallow enough for wading about in setting out the decoys, so we finished that in double time, and I was soon left alone in the box, while Jack poled away in the gloom to the beach to watch for cripples. I made myself comfortable on my improvised pillow, accustomed myself to the various positions for future observation, and waited. It was growing a little lighter, but the stillness of the night remained unbroken. A herring gull or two flew by silently, its white plumage gray in the dim light. A blue heron "quawked" farther up the shore, the only sound of life as yet. As it grew

lighter small flocks of terns skimmed by me, silent as the ghosts of their ancestors. Of a sudden I saw a great flock of large birds coming towards me from the east over the beach. They were flying in a V and my first thought was that they were geese. Then the converging lines wavered in their flight, and I knew that they were only shags, the black comorant. They passed directly over the decoys, — so near that I could hear the sound of their flapping wings above me. For the next half-hour flock after flock of them came over, a wonderful procession, many coming even nearer than the first ones. Some beetle-heads and a yellow-leg or two had begun to call upon the beach, but as yet there was neither sound nor sight of the birds whose feeding grounds I had invaded. Then out of nowhere, as it nearly always seems, I saw three black specks, close to the water far down to windward. As they grew larger I could see two swiftly moving planes on the sides of each. I slid down on my pillow, still keeping my eyes on the objects, and grasped the gun stock, feeling to make sure the safety catch was in position for quick use. The next instant three black ducks whirled up on their tail feathers, wings and legs outstretched. The leading one was already in the

water when I sat up. The other two saw me and tried to turn, to drop clean killed as their ways crossed. Up came the other, all legs and wings and quacking, only to go down again at the second barrel. This was certainly good enough for the first chance, and it was an added satisfaction to find that the water was still shallow enough where they fell to enable me to retrieve my birds myself. When lying in deep water of course one cannot leave the box, and your boatman has to come up to retrieve the birds, often spoiling a good shot by being in your immediate neighbourhood. A few minutes afterwards a grayish duck appeared from down the bay, high in the air. It paid no attention to the decoys, and the shot was a gun-strainer, but at the report the duck's head dropped and down it came like a plummet. It proved to be a female pin-tail. A little bunch of gray coots left two behind as they rushed across the decoys.

It was almost time to miss and the moment for it was at hand. I had kept as good a lookout as I could to the rear, and a last observation had shown nothing in the way in that direction. Suddenly there was the sound as of a small tornado, and the next moment a big flock of black ducks

had swooped down from behind, settling over the box like a great umbrella. Some of them were so near that I could have struck them with my gun as they swooped by. Perhaps I would have done better if I had tried it. As it was, a few of the foremost birds were in the water among the decoys when I sat up, while the rest filled the air, yet too scattered for a bunched shot. Two seemed about to cross, but before I could lead on them their ways diverged again. Again and again in successive seconds I sighted for such a shot, but it was never there. By this time the consternation caused by my sudden appearance had spread through the flock. The birds which had lighted were leaping into the air and those which had not had changed their minds about it. It was clear by now that I should have to take what I could get, and a single belated duck leaping from the decoys was the only toll I took from as large a flock of black ducks as I ever saw come to decoys. For once there was too much of a good thing, for the birds were too many and too near..

After this experience I redoubled my watch on the approaches from the rear. The pile of birds at my feet was growing nicely, all black ducks except the pin-tail and the coots, as singles

and small bunches dropped into the decoys. The birds were acting well, except for the grand fiasco, and I was shooting much better than I had expected to after two years away from the shot-gun.

During the morning one of those irresistible impulses which fortunately come to us at times led me to peer over the starboard side of the box. It was well I did, for five great geese were almost within shot. They were flying well bunched, close to the water and silently, headed outside the leading goose decoys. Their silence and sustained flight showed that the chance of their decoying was small, and that the shot must be taken as they passed at the nearest point, if at all. If they had been on the left side of the box, one could not have asked for a better chance, as they would pass within forty yards, but unfortunately they were on the right-hand side. If one shoots from the right shoulder only, it is almost impossible to cover more than about a third of your starboard ground from a battery, as you cannot turn bodily in your narrow quarters, and your left hand will leave the fore end of your gun as the swing of it goes beyond a certain point. So it is that a bird passing up on the gunner's

right hand gives him the hardest problem he can have. He must not rise too soon or the bird will sheer off out of range. He must not wait too long either, or he will find his lead on the bird lost as the gun comes to the dead centre of the swing.

The geese would offer just this shot if they kept coming, every wing beat to my advantage up to a certain instant, and then "up guards" or never. When the appointed moment came four black necks were outstretched side by side, the fifth bird a little in the rear. As I sat up they broke their formation, but one big bird crumpled up at the first barrel and splashed down into the water. I swung as far ahead of a second bird as I could, but it was not quite far enough, as I knew when I fired, and though he dropped for an instant and feathers flew, he recovered his poise and followed along after the others far up the bay. A Frenchman got him two days afterwards in a little cove where he had finally settled down.

By this time the morning was well along. The sun was high and shining brightly. The tide had gone down and the wind with it. The flight was apparently over and my visitors were few and far between. I was smoking my pipe and watch-

ing up the bay when I heard a sound coming from well inshore below me. Before I could turn it came again, the unmistakable harsh k-r-r-r-uk-k-r-r-r-uk of the brant. There they were, six of them, whirling about over the inner flats with that peculiar, almost swallow-like flight which is sometimes theirs. One moment their bellies would gleam in the sunlight silver white, and the next they would look as black as crows. They had not seen the decoys and the lack of apparent purpose in their careering made me believe they might be open to suggestion, so I took the chance and called to them. It was most successful. The birds wheeled in the direction from which the sound had come, lowered close to the water and headed for the tail of the decoys. If they kept on nothing could be better, but there was no wind to hold them and they might do anything. Just as a perfect shot was well-nigh certain, off they turned like lightning to the baleful right-hand side. It was disappointing, but the chance was still a good one, for the birds held well bunched, and three of them came down, while the survivors circled around the box out of shot three or four times before finally leaving. As I walked back from retrieving the birds it was clear enough



SETTING OUT DECOYS IN DEEP WATER.



TAKING UP DECOYS.

what had turned them, as the box was barely afloat even with my weight out of it, and its outlines plainly visible beneath the still surface of the water. The shooting was over and Jack was soon poling out from the shore in answer to my signal. We took up the decoys, tossed the wings of the box inboard and left it for the morrow, tied to a long pole thrust deep into the mud. Our eighteen birds were earnest enough for another morning there, and the presence of the brant in the bag was an encouraging forerunner of possibilities to come.

As a matter of fact it was nearly a week before I fired at brant again. In the meanwhile every morning except Sunday, which is a close day in New Brunswick, found me in the battery. The weather continued fair and warm and the shooting naturally suffered from such comfortable but otherwise unfavourable conditions, but with each day came the ever changing beauties of the sunrise, the exhilaration of the openness and space, the joyousness of the winds and waves, and with all this some one or more occurrences connected with the sport to make it notable. During this first week my bag varied from fourteen on the next best day to six on the poorest, mostly all

black ducks. One morning in a bag of twelve birds eleven were fall sheldrake. The birds were trash and I was taking any kind of a shot at them as there was nothing better stirring. I remember that a little flock of three came skurrying along, passing by on the right, and I had hardly swung on them before I reached the fatal dead centre. With so little at stake I kept swinging until the left hand lost its grasp on the gun entirely, and much to my surprise dropped two of the birds with the one barrel I could fire before the unsupported muzzles fell out of balance. I had hardly reloaded before a black duck offered almost exactly the same shot, on which I scored in the same way. I felt that I had solved the difficulties of right-handers most satisfactorily when a second black duck swung in just at my right shoulder. This time something went wrong, for the duck kept on, while the gun slipped from my shoulder with the recoil and struck me such a terrific blow on the neck that the memory of it has held me to more conservative methods ever since.

On one very calm day four single black ducks came in to my decoys from down the bay at different times, each flying close down to the

water. On each occasion it had happened that I had just been watching in that very direction, but had not seen the approaching bird until it was close in. I wondered how this could be, for I was prepared to swear that there had been no living thing above my horizon or within it. As I lay there thinking about it I happened to notice that certain fishing huts some distance down the beach were "hull down" to me at my low level. It was rather startling to arrive at the conclusion that it was the curve of our planet which had concealed the approaching fowl, but without doubt such was the fact.

It is not my intention to rehearse the slaying of each fowl nor the other details of those most enjoyable days, for nothing is ordinarily more dull to every one except the orator. To him each episode may be the theme of a new symphony of reminiscence, but he who can run will seldom stop to read. Let a few more happenings suffice, then, in this endeavour to give a taste of the flavour of the sport.

On a Saturday we came home from the box in a steady rain, the wind having swung into the northeast, with every evidence of a heavy storm coming from that direction. The next morning

it was blowing a gale and raining in torrents. In the late afternoon the rain stopped but the wind kept on, backing the high tide well up to the level of the ploughed fields, and covering the ordinarily placid lagoon with white caps. One could hear the surf pounding and roaring on the outer beach nearly four miles away. It was the change of weather we had hoped for with a vengeance, and having at last roused the elements, now, human-like, we prayed for their subsidence. The next morning it was a question whether we could cross the lagoon or not against the still heavy wind, and an even more doubtful one whether the sink-box would live in it if we got there. I took an extra man, for the trip meant hard poling to windward, and in due course we got across. The box had sunk, but we managed to get it afloat again, and after setting it out my men left me alone in it to take up their station on the shore. On our way out we had seen small flocks of brant flying by, and two or three great swarms of blue bills had also made their appearance. These with the leaden sky and heavy wind seemed most favourable openings for a good morning's sport. They proved to be, with just enough from the buffets of the wind and waves to make one feel

one was fairly earning it. Twenty-two birds, an even dozen of them brant and no trash, was the bag, a modest one, as bags should be, but with plenty of excitement in the bagging. Six of the brant piled up at my feet in the box had been one flock which came in to the lower decoys. Two dropped to the first barrel and a third to the other as they scattered. As the survivors had drifted down the wind I called to them, while I hurriedly reloaded, and back they came within easy range as I sat there in full sight but motionless until the moment for the shot. Then two of them crossed and a quick double brought down all three. I was bound to retrieve the birds myself, even at the certainty of a wetting, particularly as one of the birds was only crippled and was rapidly getting down to leeward. I did not know just how deep the water was when I stepped over, holding on to the box till I found bottom. Two inches more would have flooded my boots, but as it was it could be managed. The first thing was to stop the cripple, which done I waded to the bird farthest down to leeward, picking up the others on the way back as they came drifting down with the wind.

One of the great flocks of blue-bills came down

over me from behind that morning just as the horde of black ducks had done the week before. There was a swis-s-s-h, then a roar, and I was in the middle of a veritable bombardment of ducks. To my reply three dropped down among the decoys while the hundreds that were left dashed in towards the shore. The birds were flying so closely together that at a distance they seemed to be a solid mass, and as they swirled and swooped, looked like a great piece of fabric wafted about by the wind against the gray storm clouds.

Soon after this a single blue-bill very nearly put an end to my sport and to me with it. I was lying down in the box considering the desirability of sitting up for a moment to light my pipe. It was already filled when a bird attracted my attention down to leeward, and I thought it best to keep down until I could see what its intentions were. This all happened quickly, but even more quickly a blue-bill came over from behind, his breast not six inches from my upturned face. I do not know what the force of the blow of a two pound duck going a mile a minute is in foot pounds, but I imagine that the sum of this little knowledge would be a decidedly dangerous thing applied to the back of one's neck, where I would

have gotten it except for that moment of hesitation.

The brant came to bag every day after this, as the storm seemed to have started them along, though Jack insisted that the number of birds was nothing compared to what there ought to be in the bay by that time.

The first arrivals of the brant have the habit of going out to the ocean at night, coming in again just before sunrise, or earlier still if there is a moon. There was a moon just at that time, and one morning we planned to be in the box in time to forestall them on their return flight, for which we had been too late hitherto. I do not remember what the unholy hour was when Jack left me in the box, but to all appearances it might have been midnight. The stars were bright and the moon was sending a broad wake over the smooth water, but the moon was behind me, and down to leeward everything was as black as Egypt. Barring the occasional quack of a black duck there was not a sound to be heard. I had about decided that I would make up a little sleep till sunrise when the familiar kr-r-r-r-uk, kr-r-r-r-uk sounded off to the eastward in the darkness. On came the sounds, nearer and nearer, until the flock passed

behind me in full cry down the bay. The birds could see the decoys in the moonlight, but the box was equally visible at the height at which they were flying, and this sad experience was repeated a dozen times as flock after flock hailed the decoys from the darkness and went on. I had about given up all hope of a shot at the incomers when a lusty kr-r-r-uk resounded directly behind me, and in a moment it sounded nearer still. I had found that I could cover the wake of the moon by swinging around to the left side, and just as I sat up with gun in hand to try for a shot if the bird came into it, a brant whirled into the golden pathway. He dropped at the flash, and in a moment I had my game in hand, as fine and heavy a brant as I have ever seen, and the only bird I have ever killed by morning moonlight.

Just before sunrise the wind shifted to the northwest. It blew harder and harder as the hours went on and the early morning movement of the birds had ceased so completely that it was more than doubtful whether I should add to my bag or not. Several flocks of cormorants had given their false alarms as they turned in from the sea over the outer beach to the lagoon, when the long line of another flock of large birds rose above

the sky line of the dunes. It needed but a moment's observation of their flight to prove that the birds were geese, and as anything may happen when birds are in the air, I dropped my pipe and made myself as small as possible in the box, though the chances of a shot were of the slightest. The geese followed the general line which the flocks of cormorants had taken, crossing the beach about a quarter of a mile below me and flying well in the air. They showed no signs of having seen the decoys at all, and the only hope seemed to be to attract their attention. As they crossed below me, straight down the wind, I called to them. The effect was instantaneous and a chorus of answering cries came back in quick response. The leading birds stopped in their course and turned into the teeth of the strong wind, labouring heavily, while their followers closed up behind them in close ranks. I had counted twenty-three in the flock and their honking sounded like the full cry of a pack of beagles. Their flight was slow against the heavy wind and the moments seemed interminable as I lay there in plain sight of them. They were soon near enough for me to see why the box had even so long escaped their notice. The leaders had riveted their attention upon a little group of goose

decoys on my left quarter and the other birds were apparently blindly following them. Now the first rank lowered in its flight with sudden pitching and poising of the broad wings, followed by the birds behind them until there were four tiers of them, looking like so many approaching parachutes. These successive lowerings continued until the leading birds flew close to the water, four of them flying together with long black necks outstretched, close in to the decoys, the rest of the flock following down from their higher level in an undulating line. That was the appointed moment, and at the first shot two of the big birds dropped with splashes that it was good to see. A third one was hard hit and came down at the second barrel, while the rest of the birds, swung down the wind, re-forming again, and were soon lost to sight far out over the sea. With a little more luck it would have been perfectly within the possibilities to have dropped all four of the leading birds with the first barrel in the position in which they were, as the four necks could seemingly have been surrounded with the span of one's hands. It had been wonderfully exciting to lie there on the verge of discovery at any moment and then to have things turn out so well.


There was one morning before I left when all one's best laid plans seemed to go wrong, and although I had some good sport as it was, two occurrences gave rather a bad taste to it. I had seen a flock of seven brant coming from across the lagoon, and as I kept an eye on them over the edge of the box it became clear that they would come in high on my right side if they decoyed at all, or pass over the box if they kept on their course. In either event the shot would be a hard one, and as it became manifest that they were not going to decoy it seemed best to wait until the birds were directly over me before sitting up, and take the shot as they kept on across me. On they came in a straight line, wing to wing, and as they were fairly over the right of the box I sat up and covered the point where they ought to be the next instant. Nothing came there at all and with the tail of my eye I saw the seven big birds pivot on their tail feathers back whence they had come, escaping unscathed after having been within ten yards of me. A little after this I was watching another good-sized flock of brant approaching from well up to windward at my left shoulder. They were unquestionably coming to the decoys, and a good shot was a certainty as the

birds were flying low and well together. Of a sudden I became conscious of whirling objects and much splashing over and in among the decoys at the foot of the box. Another flock of brant had come into the box on my blind side just at this most inauspicious time, welcome as they would have been a few minutes sooner or later. I sat up instinctively, bad judgment as it doubtless was to do so, and dropped one bird as it leaped up from the decoys. The others of the flock, panic-stricken at sight of me and at the shot, darted off in every direction, while the first flock had come so near before turning that the best chance for my second barrel seemed to be at one of its departing laggards which tumbled some seventy yards away. Each flock coming alone would probably have been good for three or four birds, so there was but little real satisfaction in the bungling double which was actually accomplished.

It was possible to squeeze in about two hours with the decoys on the last morning of my stay before starting for the steamer, and seven brant and two black ducks were their very satisfactory reward. The number of birds in the bay had doubled since the morning before, and their cries could be heard almost every moment from almost

any direction. New flocks kept coming in over the outer beach, some flying in compact masses, some wing to wing in long extended lines, others in angles or in echelon like the flight of geese. Jack's assurance that the brant were just beginning to come did not make it any easier to leave them, but unfortunately the call of duty was more insistent than theirs could be. I could understand the feeling of Odysseus filling his ears with wax against the voices of the sirens, and when I remember the stirring cries of the wild fowl those roseate mornings, there are times when the safest thing would seem to be to follow his example.

The Hunted

P the swift river they toiled,
Leaving the night's camp behind them,
Working their way up the stream
Still farther into the forest.
Agile, alert and quick-eyed
Stood the two stalwart canoemen,
Sons of the old voyageurs,
Bending their broad backs in measure;
Now fending off from the rocks,
Now turning short past an eddy,
Now holding hard at a shoot
For the quick leap up the rapid;
Past the deep tree-shadowed pools
Where the great trout swam together,
Lying with heads to the stream
Watching what they might devour;
Past the black shores of the bogans,
Tracked by the moose and the red deer,
Home of the musquash and heron;

Through the long ribands of alder,
Store of the provident beaver;
By the gray columns of pine
Blasted by time or the lightning,
Ghosts of the forest primeval,
Pulpits of owls for their hooting,
Watch-towers of the kingfishers.
Up through the woodland they pressed,
Watching the banks of the river,
Tracing the sign on the shore,
Peering in through the thick alders,
Ready with rifles at hand
For the first view of the quarry.
Onward and onward they sped,
Keen in the zest of their hunting.

Bright rose the sun at the dawn
Gilding the tops of the mountains,
Fire-scarred, riven and bare,
Desolate under the heavens;
Lifting the mists from the valley,
Darting its rays through the branches,
Breaking the gloom in the forest.
Out of the stillness came sounds,
Sounds of the forest awaking.
Then flew the soft wingèd owl

Home to its nest in the thicket,
Lone of the birds of the air
Greeting the dawning with silence.
Up from the cradling lake
Rose the wild duck with its quacking,
Circling aloft for its flight
Swift to the brooks and the marshes,
Leaving the loon at its bath,
Laughing with glee in the sunshine.
Ruffling his gray-friar's plumes,
Moose-bird, the thief of the greenwood
Screamed to his shrill calling mate
Filching the notes of their neighbours.
Calling the sluggards from sleep,
Woodpecker, reveille sounding,
Busily breaking his fast
Roused the swift wrath of the squirrel
Waked from his sleep in his nest,
Scolding at all the disturbance.
Then from their couches of moss
Rose up the antlered woods-cattle,
Moose, caribou and the deer,
Snuffing the wind through their nostrils,
Making assurance more sure
Ere they began with their browsing.
Then rose the queen of them all,

Bride of the monarch of forests,
Bride of the year that had passed,
Latest to yield to his wooing,
While at her side her first born,
Pride of her heart and her darling,
Pledge of the love of her lord
Ambled ungainly about her.
Smoothing his glossy brown coat
Lovingly toiled the fond mother,
Seeking her love to express;
Making him ready for breakfast;
Breakfast of browse and sweet grass,
Browse of the moosewood and alder,
Sprouts of the poplar and maple,
Twigs of the white birch and yellow;
These the good mother provided
Out of the store of the forest
Pulling the branches on high
Down to the mouth of her first born.
Then with his hunger appeased
Led she the way to the river.
Threading the wandering paths
Tramped by the beasts of the forest,
Came she at length to the shore
Where the swift current in turning
Thrust back the flood at its bend,

Making a quiet dead-water.
Into the water they splashed,
Thirsting and heated from travel,
Thrusting their muzzles beneath,
Glad of its cooling refreshment,
Plunging their heads to the bottom,
Seeking the roots of the lilies;
Then on the bank laid them down
On the damp weeds and long grasses,
Under the alders and elms,
Cool in the heat of the noon day.
Placid and peaceful they lay,
Drowsy and filled with contentment,
Flicking the flies with their ears,
Taking the midday siesta.
As at her treasure she gazed,
Sleepy eyed, nearing to dream-land,
Memories rose from the past,
Thoughts of her lord and his wooing.
Scarce had a twelve-month gone by
Since she had left her good mother,
Wearied of all that she knew,
Restless with feelings she knew not.
Into the forest she strayed
Wondering, timid, and wistful,
Knowing not whither she roamed

Nor of the quest of her roaming.
Bright shone the moon in the sky
When she came forth at the river
Winding its glittering path
Through the black walls of the forest.
Silent were all living things,
Silent the forest around her,
Silent the night overhead,
Pall-like with awful oppression.
Then from her fluttering heart,
Swelling with Nature's great forces,
Called she aloud through the night,
Voicing the longing she knew not.
Thrice did she call and again,
Easing her breast of its throbbing,
Filling the forest with sound
Echoing up through the valley;
Then stood in wondering fear
Frightened to think of her boldness.
Hark! at the moment her heart
Doubled the stress of its beating.
Out of the depths of the woods
Poured forth a thunderous bellow;
Crashed out the falling of trees,
Rending and tearing of branches,
Sounds as of broad bladed horns

Smiting the tree trunks in passing.
Fearful in mind but with eyes
Bright with a kindling fire
Called she again through the night:
Once more the resonant answer
Sounded abroad in its might
Nearer and nearer approaching,
Till through the thick of the woods
On the far bank of the river
Burst forth the King of the forest,
Out to the beach of the river.
There as he stood in his strength,
Radiant in the clear moonlight
With mighty antlers upspread,
Golden beneath its bright lustre,
Gazed she entranced at his might,
Filled with a wondering tumult.
Then as the path of a star
Dashed from its place in the heavens
Flashes across the dark clouds,
So to her being came knowledge.
Him had her fate fore-ordained!
For him her quest and her longing!
There stood her mate through the world;
Nature had made her great answer!
Now was she glad and content.



"BREASTED THE FORCE OF THE STREAM
WHERE THE SWIFT CURRENT RAN DEEPEST."

Eager in joyous surrender,
Out from the shadow she stepped,
Into the light of the moonbeams.
Seeing her there as she moved,
Lithe, silken coated and graceful,
Fires burned forth from his eyes,
And with a roar, high up-rearing
Into the river he leaped,
Dashing the spray to the tree tops;
Leaped he again and again
Leaving his path molten silver;
Breasted the force of the stream
Where the swift current ran deepest,
Then gaining foothold at length
Sprang from the water before her.
Into his red gleaming eyes
Looked she but once without faltering,
Then bowed the drooping brown head,
Token of willing submission,
While on her shoulder her lord,
Panting with rut and with conquest
Rested his mighty maned neck,
First of her maiden caresses.
So for the moment they stood
Knowing their seeking was ended;
Then in the forest they plunged;

Thus was her wooing and wedding.
So the sweet thoughts of the past
Quickened to life in the present;
Now the closed eyes saw again
All things that thus had befallen
While on her ear seemed to fall
Gladdest of sounds to her hearing,
As of the step of her lord
Seeking her side from his wanderings.
There was the smite of his hoofs
Crunching the gravel beneath them;
That was a step in the stream
Splashing the water around him.
Nearer and nearer he came, —
Then with a bound she awakened,
Conscious of fate drawing near,
Knowing no lover approached her.
On the soft breath of the wind
Came the dread scent of the hunters
Making their way up the stream,
Striking the rocks with their pickpoles.
Giving the signal for flight,
Snorting the taint from her nostrils
Into the thicket she leaped,
Into the forest's deep refuge,
Then with new safety assured

Waited the steps of her offspring.
Nothing she saw nor she heard
Making a sign of his coming.
All remained peaceful and still;
Had she but dreamed of the danger?
Slowly retracing her path,
Watchful and eager and anxious,
Hopeful and fearful in turn
Sought she the trail of her dear one.
Ah! then the poor heart stood still.
Loud the report of a rifle
Rang through the echoing groves,
Then a low cry — and then silence,
But as the bullet had sped
So to the heart of the mother
Came that last cry of her babe
Calling for her in his anguish.
Helpless and frantic with grief,
Filled with the terror of instinct,
Nearing the spot as she dared
Stole the distracted young mother;
Heard the harsh voices of men,
Smelled a strange sickening odour;
Then the sharp click of the poles
Growing more faint in the distance,
Till the great stillness returned

Over the valley and forest,
Blotting out all that had been
Save from that heart overflowing.
Bearing her burden of woe,
Stunned by the blow that had fallen,
Slowly she turned towards the hills,
On through the lengthening shadows,
Striving to fly from her grief,
Finding it ever before her.
Deeper the shades hemmed her round;
Deeper the hopeless dumb sorrow.
Then for a moment she paused;
Drawn by the spell that was o'er her,
Back through the forest she sped,
Back to the bank of the river.
There was his couch in the grass
Where he had rested beside her,
Tramped by the footprints of men,
Reddened and broken the grasses;
There had they borne him along
Where the canoe prow had rested;
There the trail ended its course
Lost in the swift running river.
Over the water she gazed
Through the gray mists of the evening,
When from her grief-stricken heart

Burst a great cry for her lost one.
Once and again did she call
Into the silence and darkness,
And a great owl from his perch
Lone of live things made her answer.

The End.

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